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To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"](#)
Date: 2/23/2023 12:33:40 PM
Subject: E Hastings encampment - update

Good afternoon Mayor and Council,

Please find below an update on the East Hasting encampment along with recommended messaging for any public comment on this matter. We are providing this information in advance of our Friday consolidated response to questions, given the evolving situation on East Hastings and the press conference convened by Pivot earlier today.

If you have questions at Sandra.Singh@Vancouver.ca or Taryn.Scollard@vancouver.ca

Best,
Paul

Engineering and ACCS Homelessness Services teams continue to work daily along East Hastings St to remove accumulating debris and structures to enable clear and safe passage along sidewalks, enable unencumbered access to buildings, and address the ongoing fire risk (as identified in and directed to by the Fire Chief's Order (FCO)).

Summary

- 66 structures remain, a slight increase from last week.
 - Daily work to both clear accumulating debris and encourage people to remove structures continues.
 - Staff continue to remove on average 3,500 kg of material a day.
- Outreach Services staff continue to connect with people along Hastings St who are experiencing homelessness, offering shelter and, if available, housing.
 - Staff are in regular contact with approximately 90 people along Hastings St who are in need of housing: approximately 69 of them have been in the area since October and 23 have moved to the area since then. Of the 69 people who have been there since October:
 - ⊙41% are women and 59% are men
 - ⊙46% identify as Indigenous

- 24 people are in couples (12 couples)

- The limiter on the progress of this work remains the availability of shelter and housing for individuals who do not have other options.

Key Messages

We would appreciate you referring any media inquiries to media@vancouver.ca. If you are approached for comment by media or constituents, here are proposed key messages and Q&As to support responses:\u8239 \u8239 \u8239

- Our Homelessness Services Outreach team continues to connect with people sheltering outdoors on East Hastings Street and supporting them to access income, support services and housing and shelter spaces as they become available.
- The City and BC Housing continue to work with our partners on a variety of options to meet the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness in Vancouver, including longer term options, such as the expedited creation of more social and supportive housing.
- Recognizing that demand is greater than available housing, and people are living in unsafe conditions on the street, shelter space is an important interim solution for people to come inside and stay dry and warm throughout the winter and until housing is available.
- As more supportive housing and SRO units come online, partners will continue to offer available housing to people in shelters and those who are unsheltered in Vancouver. We recognize that shelter is not housing and some SRO rooms are seen as far from ideal. However, these indoor options are warmer and drier than sleeping outdoors, especially during the winter months.
- City staff continue to be out on E Hastings on a daily basis to clean and to encourage people to remove their structures. E Hastings has high numbers of pedestrians and the structures present significant fire risks, obstruct sidewalk and building access, and create road safety concerns. When necessary, staff are enforcing the Street and Traffic By-law 2849, Section 71A, which prohibits the accumulation of structures and personal belongings on sidewalks. Where individuals are required to remove their structures and have indicated that they do not have other housing, they are being offered access to shelter spaces or available SRO rooms. The work is critical in terms of addressing the Fire Chief's order, addressing life safety risk and returning the street to diverse activities.

Additional Operational Information

Daily work

- Engineering staff attend to clean and encourage people to remove their structures and put them in storage if needed.
- When necessary, staff are issuing written and verbal notice to enforce the Street and Traffic By-law 2849, Section 71A, which prohibits the accumulation of structures and personal belongings on sidewalks.
- Daily reminders are provided and should an impoundment be necessary, belongings are stored by Engineering for 30 days.
- Homelessness Services Outreach staff conduct early morning visits daily to offer shelter and other supports as needed to those willing to engage with staff.

Reminder: Approach to By-Law Enforcement

1. Engineering staff identify a site or sites where the structures and/or amount of accumulated belongings need to be reduced due to accessibility, fire, or safety concerns. In all cases, staff have had regular contact with the site occupants and have a good sense of the types of activities and individuals at these locations.
2. When a priority site or other site has been identified for by-law enforcement, Engineering notifies Homelessness Services Outreach staff who work with people at those sites who have no housing and are willing to engage to take a shelter offer and work on longer term housing options as they become available.
3. Engineering provides the site occupants with 7-day written notice that structures must be removed. In the days to follow, Engineering returns to the site to provide verbal notice and to encourage voluntarily removal of structures. Information about options for voluntary storage is also provided.
4. Homelessness Services Outreach staff do early morning visits and encourage site occupants to take shelter offers.
5. At the end of the 7-day notice period, Engineering staff enforce the by-law which involves taking down the structures and impounding any belongings the occupants have not packed up themselves to remove.
 - VPD is present during impoundment on the request of Engineering to ensure the safety of the staff and public while doing the work in the event the situation escalates.
 - A safe work zone perimeter is set up around the site to ensure that members of the public are not put in unsafe conditions around vehicles and equipment. This zone also assists Engineering staff in working safely without harassment or other physical interference from bystanders. The safe zone is set up to enable visibility to ensure observers or others can observe the work.
6. Site occupants are provided with information on how to obtain any belongings that have been impounded.

7. The 7-day notice period can be extended to take into account inclement weather or timing of accepted shelter /housing.

Services

- The City and BC Housing continue to fund storage services at Main & Hastings St so that people without housing can store their belongings that they need ready access to nearby.
- The City and BC Housing continue to fund operations of a women's drop-in at the 320 Alexander to ensure women have a safe place to go.
- Staff are activating an additional washroom at 144 E Hastings St using funds from a UBCM grant intended to support enhanced washroom access for people experiencing homelessness.
- Mission Possible continues to provide navigation in front of/near women's housing and DTES Women's Centre to support safe passage around the area for women (UBCM grant)
- Engineering Services, in partnership with ACCS, is in the process of awarding the 6 month contract to Mission Possible for a peer-based cleaning initiative focused in the encampment area (funding via UBCM grant)

Staff Safety

- Safety of City staff working in the area remains a primary concern.
- Engineering staff have noted that tensions are intensifying and that responses to staff requests to reduce belongings and remove structures are increasingly aggressive and/or hostile.

Key Metrics

To date: August 17, 2022 – February 20, 2023

- 506 tents and structures have been taken down
- 574,620 kg of materials have been removed.
- 1,404 propane tanks have been removed
- 955 meal tickets distributed
- 372 personal storage carts distributed by sanitation

- 285 of outdoor fires responded to by VFRS (July 1st 2022 to January 31, 2023)
- 71 people have accepted housing offers and 118 have accepted shelter offers

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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 səliłwətał (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.