

From: **"Singh, Sandra"**
To: **"Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"**
Date: 1/12/2024 2:36:38 PM
Subject: RE: Update: Cold weather response and Oppenheimer Park Update

Hello Mayor and Council,

I have received a number of questions related to cold, daytime shelters, warming centre use last evening and whether there were any turnaways, timing of closures and opening, etc. Staff are compiling some additional information and I will provide an update before end of day.

My apologies for the delay – staff are working intensely to see whether we can activate more spaces, address gaps that arise (e.g., times at WECC), and respond to information queries.

Thank you for your understanding – we very much appreciate this level of concern about the city's most vulnerable residents. More information to come shortly.

Sandra

From: Singh, Sandra
Sent: Thursday, January 11, 2024 5:30 PM
To: Direct to Mayor and Council - DL
Cc: City Manager's Correspondence Group - DL
Subject: Update: Cold weather response and Oppenheimer Park Update

Good afternoon Mayor and Council,

As we head into the cold weather, I thought we should share a bit more information about how public realm By-law enforcement is handled in relation to people without housing for whom we have heightened concern in relation to health and safety impacts of extreme cold. As well, below provides an update on the ongoing work at Oppenheimer Park.

Cold Weather

- Enforcement of Park Board and City By-laws is a necessary daily activity to ensure safety and access to the public realm, so this operational work continues. The only time we may pause is during an active snowstorm or other weather or public safety event where the work is not possible to do safely.
- In very cold weather, our focus is on urging people to come inside to Warming Centres or shelters. It is dangerous to be out in the extreme cold, both in terms of health risks (e.g., hypothermia) and the increased risk of fires due to heating attempts (candles, propane tanks, etc. have all caused tent fire deaths in the past).
- Engineering crews and Parks Rangers all have the Warming Center & Winter Shelter information sheet so that we can ensure the most up-to-date information is shared and they share this information with people on the streets.
- In very cold weather like this, impoundment is infrequent but if needed or appropriate, staff would proceed. They exercise discretion at these times.
- Engineering contractor Mission Possible, who supports our public realm cleanliness work along E Hastings St, is handing out emergency blankets to anyone that needs one.
- ACCS has updated the EWR and shelter listings at vancouver.ca with two new EWR sites that they were able to secure, adding an additional 15 spaces in operations.
- ACCS continues to work with colleagues in Real Estate to identify other spaces to activate as shelter and warming centres.
- Carnegie Centre is going to open two hours earlier at 7:00 am on Friday the 12th and Saturday the 13th. They are exploring operational feasibility of an early opening on the 14th and 15th as well.

In terms of getting the word out, the Homelessness Services Association of BC issues the notice of EWR activation to government, VPD, TransLink, and community and social service providers (anyone can sign up for the email list: <https://hsa-bc.ca/extreme-weather-notifications.html>). 211 also has a daily list of what's open, and we add a yellow banner/ribbon across the City's website on the home page with a link to information. Communications also pushes out messages on the City's social media. All City-related street-based workers – Sanitation crews, Park Rangers, Outreach staff, VFRS and VPD have this information as well and collectively encourage people to come inside. There indeed may be some people in the community who are not aware of places they can go, but if they approach a City worker, non-profit provider

or go to Carnegie Centre, the Evelyne Saller Centre, or any public library, those staff should all have information to share.

Oppenheimer Park

- Historically, encampments at Oppenheimer start fast and grow fast, often fuelled by activities of organizers who are not themselves without housing.
- Given the very active organizing currently related to Oppenheimer Park, we remain very concerned about the potential for the growth of an encampment. Daily By-law enforcement each morning will continue as per above.
- Effective Saturday, Engineering Services will deploy a By-law enforcement team to the park in the afternoon on an as needed basis. Of note, this team is a redeployment from E Hastings St. We will monitor the impacts on E Hastings of this redeployment.
- As above, crews and team members will continue to encourage people to come inside from the cold where it is warmer, healthier, and safer.
- As of this morning, there were 15 tents in Oppenheimer Park. All but one resident complied with the By-law. This person's tent was allowed to continue to remain because the occupant has severe burns. The occupant has refused medical treatment or the advised transfer to hospital and the VCH IHOT team has been engaged and is monitoring the situation. Staff are very concerned about the person's health but people cannot be forced to go to hospital.

We recognize that seeing coverage of this work in media can often lead to questions and concerns about the City's response. Our Homeless Outreach team is actively engaged with individuals sheltering in parks and Rangers and Engineering staff make every effort to connect individuals with services, where they are interested to do so. We want to acknowledge that Park Rangers and Engineering crews are asked to play a very difficult role in maintaining the accessibility, vibrancy, and safety of our parks and the public realm. Until such time as there is a systemic solution to the homelessness crisis in the region, we will continue to do our best to balance the diverse demands and issues that arise and appreciate Council's support for the staff doing this difficult work.

Thank you,
Sandra

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The City of Vancouver acknowledges the unceded homelands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Selilwitulh (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.