



May 10, 2024

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners

FROM : Steve Jackson – General Manager, Board of Parks and Recreation

SUBJECT : **Encampments in Vancouver Parks – Board Briefing Memo**

Dear Commissioners,

The purpose of this memo is to provide a summary of work currently underway that relates to direction from the Board on [April 8, 2024](#), re: Temporary Shelters in Parks, relevant to this memo is clause (D.) included below:

“THAT the Board direct staff to reach out within 24 hours to the provincial government with the request to strike a joint working group on matters specific to encampments in Vancouver Parks;

FURTHER THAT although this working group will be led by Park Board staff, the invitation to participate in this working group be extended to other groups including City of Vancouver staff, the Vancouver Police Department, Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services and Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh.”

Per direction noted above, staff sent a letter on April 9, 2024, to the Homelessness, Partnerships and Housing Supports Team, who recently suggested staff reach out to the Engagement and Encampment Response Team, which staff have done.

The motion also directs staff to strike and lead a joint working group on matters specific to encampments in Vancouver Parks. Encampments require a multi-faceted and considerate approach, as such, respectful collaboration across jurisdictions and interested groups is essential. Conversations with the Decolonization, Arts, and Culture Team are guiding how to best connect and engage with the Nations on this matter; staff will report back in the future. Included below are some working groups and initiatives already underway.

Bi-weekly Meetings

Staff from the Park Board and Arts, Culture and Community Services, along with representatives from Vancouver Coastal Health, BC Housing, and the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, as well as local non-profit organizations, meet bi-weekly to discuss encampments. Discussions at these meetings focus on the individual and group needs of those sheltering in the encampment and how best to provide and engage those needs as a multi-disciplinary group. This group is composed of managers and directors of the respective organizations to enable decision making in a timely manner. This group was created to also bring a rights-based and equity lens to those sheltering in the park. Therefore, we aim to look at all aspects of those sheltering in the encampment to provide a humanitarian way of working.



HEART and HEARTH

Park Board and City Staff are actively working on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with BC Housing to implement the [HEART and HEARTH program](#). This program will enable the Park Board and the City to partner with BC Housing to provide people living outdoors and in encampments with better access to a range of support services.

While the final MoU is expected to be finalized this December 2024, the Park Board and the City, along with other members of HEART, have already begun to coordinate efforts in preparation of the possible launch of the HEARTH program in 2025, which will assist with the development and operation of emergency housing and shelter options in Vancouver.

The Homeless Encampment Action Response Team (HEART) and the Homeless Encampment Action Response Temporary Housing (HEARTH) program is funded by the Province under the Belonging in BC Homelessness Plan. The MoU is expected to be finalized this December.

Summary

Park Board staff maintain good working relationships with various forms of government and colleagues from across various disciplines when advocating for continued conversation, action and resources related to encampments in Vancouver Parks. The Park Board has and will continue to lead the conversation on topics that impact Vancouver Parks.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "S. Jackson".

Steve Jackson (*he/him*)
General Manager, Board of Parks and Recreation

Copy to: PB LT