

MOTION ON NOTICE

4. **Emergency Action to Support Vancouver's Homeless People, Including Those in Oppenheimer Park**

Submitted by: Councillor Swanson

WHEREAS

1. There are currently numerous tents of people sleeping in Oppenheimer Park;
2. The housing units offered by BC Housing to residents of Oppenheimer Park are now all taken;
3. Many people staying in the park state that it is safer than staying alone on the street or in an alley;
4. Many people state that they prefer to stay in the park than in a shelter that is not safe and is not able to meet the needs of campers with partners, pets or belongings;
5. Most residents are living with makeshift shelters, lack of proper nutrition, no storage facilities, and no formal source of heat;
6. There are many elderly and vulnerable residents already living with chronic illnesses and ill-health;
7. The Overdose Prevention Site (OPS) at Oppenheimer Park operates 24-hours per day and serves over 100 people per day without paid staff, proper supports or electricity;
8. There is no proper sanitation at the park to support those who are employed or seeking employment, and to promote good health of all residents;
9. The field house was closed this summer, but could provide a space for safe food preparation and serving, storage of harm reduction and food preparation supplies and equipment, electricity, and a resting place for OPS volunteers;
10. While most people agree that tent cities are not a good way to live, when there is no housing or shelter available people can be safer in a tent city than being alone on the street;
11. 2223 homeless people were counted in the last homeless count which is recognized as an undercount, and over 600 of these people were unsheltered, and all of them continue to need housing as soon as possible;

12. Social and modular housing will take years (social) and months (modular) to build if there is funding for it, and people who are homeless deserve safety, warmth, and sanitation now, especially with winter coming;
13. Oppenheimer Park is on unceded territory, and Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, says, "A disproportionately high number of the vulnerable park residents facing the loss of a safe and stable living situation are Indigenous. Any move to forcefully evict them is callous and insensitive to the mental health, addictions, and poverty that they are battling as a result of an ongoing colonial legacy of systemic discrimination and oppression. The City of Vancouver stands to violate the basic rights of Indigenous peoples articulated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, as well as blatantly ignore the call for safe housing that is appropriate to the cultural and economic needs of Indigenous peoples set out in the National Inquiry's Calls for Justice";
14. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing, Leilani Farha, says, "In order for the City's actions to be compliant with human rights, the residents of Oppenheimer Park need to be meaningfully consulted and included in the development of any plans related to their living situations. This includes working with the residents so that together they can find ways to address issues around fire safety, community clean-up, and violence"; and
15. In April, Council passed a motion to 'temporarily implement a warming station in Oppenheimer Park or other city owned land within close proximity,' to 'provide washroom facilities for park patrons including 24 hour access,' and to 'communicate about other possible solutions to help end and humanize homelessness.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Council acknowledge that homelessness in Vancouver is a humanitarian crisis that requires immediate action above and beyond what has been done until now.
- B. THAT Council direct staff to work with partners and consult with Oppenheimer Park residents about an accessible alternate site that ensures health and safety, access to services and supports, and is acceptable and appropriate for people currently living in Oppenheimer Park, including access to a community kitchen, electricity, funding for peer support, storage facilities, 24-hour sanitation facilities with running water, and a warming tent in Oppenheimer Park or other indoor site near downtown eastside services.
- C. THAT Council direct city officials to attend weekly resident led safety meetings and that the City encourage representatives of other jurisdictions including VPD staff and the Park Board to do this too.

- D. THAT the City convene emergency homelessness task force meetings of elected Federal, Provincial, City, Park Board members, and invite the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and people who are homeless and their representatives, to make short and longer term plans to ensure that all currently unsheltered people without homes have a place to be safe and warm for the winter and to get proper housing as soon as possible.

FURTHER THAT the work of the emergency homelessness task force includes:

- i. Providing new housing options for Oppenheimer park residents and other unsheltered people who are homeless, and/or buying or leasing one or more hotels while ensuring appropriate housing for women and for Indigenous women and children, until proper housing can be built;
- ii. Securing land and government funding for modular homes, social and co-op housing to drastically reduce homelessness in Vancouver.

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