

B.7

NOTICE OF COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

7. Temporary Disaster Relief Shelter(s) for People who are Experiencing Homelessness in Vancouver

Submitted by: Councillor Wiebe and Councillor Bligh

WHEREAS

1. The 2019 Vancouver Homeless Count found at least 2,223 people identified as homeless, and at least 614 people living on the street unsheltered in the city of Vancouver in 2019. British Columbia has nearly 3,000 unsheltered people;
2. Encampments for people experiencing homelessness and others are arising in parks and public spaces across the city of Vancouver. Moving people from current encampments, without adequate indoor housing options and support services, can exacerbate their vulnerable position, and move people into other areas, such as streets, back lanes, and other parks. In the last five months, Vancouver has seen encampment communities move from Oppenheimer Park to a port parking lot adjacent to Crab Park, and presently to Strathcona Park after a legal injunction forced eviction from Federal Port Land. Today the encampment is estimated to have well over 100 homeless residents and as many as 300 tents;
3. Today, unsheltered people set up camps in parks and public spaces across the city of Vancouver. These camps provide shelter for some of Vancouver's most vulnerable residents, and also impact the use of greenspace and the public realm by nearby sheltered residents, which has become increasingly important during the COVID-19 pandemic. In some cases like Strathcona Park or its predecessor Oppenheimer Park, semi-permanent sheltering in the parks can pose public safety and health risks to both sheltered and unsheltered residents. Police, park rangers, and outside workers also have no sanctioned and appropriate options to provide shelter to people experiencing homelessness. Existing shelters are operating at a reduced capacity, while many SROs have implemented a no-guest policy, due to the COVID-19 situation;
4. Homelessness and the rise of encampments are complex challenges requiring solutions from all orders of government, in particular the Province of British Columbia. The City of Vancouver, the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation and its agencies are responsible for parks and public realm, streets and safety, and creating a regulatory environment to support efficient service delivery and well-being for all Vancouverites. Metro Vancouver is responsible for administering resources and services common across the region, including policy on homelessness and affordable housing for the region. The Provincial and Federal Governments' role is to partner and invest in public health, poverty reduction and affordable housing;
5. On August 6, 2015, in *Abbotsford (City) v. Shantz*, the Supreme Court of British Columbia ruled that bylaws prohibiting people experiencing homelessness from

sleeping in public places violate Section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which protects individuals' safety and security of person. The ruling allows people to erect shelters and sleep in municipal public spaces and parks between the hours of 7:00 p.m. and 9:00 a.m. The decision means that people can no longer be evicted from public spaces and parks during those hours. In his ruling, Chief Justice Hinkson explained, "The constant movement of the homeless exacerbated their already vulnerable positions, as it inhibited the ability of the service providers who endeavoured to help the City's homeless to actually locate them and provide help;"¹

6. In April 2016, the Opioid Overdose Crisis prompted the provincial health officer to declare a Public Health Emergency. Since then over 1,000 Vancouverites have lost their lives due to overdose. The crisis remains unresolved;
7. In March 2019, the Province of BC released TogetherBC: British Columbia's Poverty Reduction Strategy, which sets the Province's path to reducing overall poverty by 25% and child poverty by 50% in five years. Built on the principles of Affordability, Opportunity, Reconciliation, and Social Inclusion, TogetherBC focuses on six priority action areas:
 - More affordable housing for more people;
 - Supporting families, children and youth;
 - Expanding access to education and training;
 - More opportunities, more jobs;
 - Improving income supports;
 - Investing in social inclusion;
8. On February 26, 2020, Vancouver City Council declared a Homelessness Emergency and urged the Government of Canada, the Province of BC, Metro Vancouver, local governments and other partners, to make a Homelessness Emergency Plan to build or find dignified, affordable housing for at least 80 percent of people counted as homeless within three years;
9. In March 2020, a Public Health Emergency and a State of Emergency were declared by the Province of BC and City of Vancouver respectively in response to the COVID-19 pandemic;
10. Between February and September 2020, the Province of BC committed to a number of housing solutions: approximately 100 units of Temporary Modular Housing and a 60-bed Navigation Centre for delivery starting in spring of 2021 on City-owned lands. While these housing solutions are in progress, there is an immediate need to provide shelter, safety, and security for residents today and during the Fall and Winter of 2020;
11. As the City and Metro Vancouver is challenged to respond to the concurrent homeless emergency, overdose crisis, and pandemic health emergency, it becomes clear these hazards have intersected in a way that are considered a disaster;
12. The Emergency Management Framework for Canada (2011, Second Edition) defines a disaster as: "a social phenomenon that results when a hazard

intersects with a vulnerable community in a way that exceeds or overwhelms the community's ability to cope and may cause serious harm to the safety, health, welfare, property or environment of people"; and

13. The City of Vancouver's Emergency Response states: "In case of a disaster the City will open reception and group lodging centres to look after people who have to leave their homes."

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Council recognizes that the Homelessness Emergency is a complex challenge requiring solutions from all orders of government, First Nations, businesses, community organizations and individuals; and temporary shelters for people experiencing homelessness are not the solution, but that the immediate concerns around public realm, safety and unsheltered individuals must be addressed by the City.
- B. THAT Council acknowledges, with gratitude, the proposed Provincial Government's medium to long range interventions but recognizes that the measures announced to date will not adequately address the scale of the concurrent hazards of homelessness, overdose crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic in a timely manner.
- C. THAT Council direct staff to prepare a Disaster Relief Shelter framework as soon as possible, to provide a managed and safe location or locations to address the concurrent hazards of homelessness, overdose crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic.
- D. THAT Council direct staff to locate and operationalize a location or locations for "Disaster Relief Shelter";

FURTHER THAT the location or locations:

- a. May be owned by the City of Vancouver;
- b. Are not on designated or undesignated parkland (parks);
- c. Are in general proximity to Downtown Eastside;
- d. Are low-barrier to access;
- e. Are serviceable for power, water, and related services; and
- f. Can support appropriately physically distanced tents and services;

FURTHER THAT Disaster Relief Shelter provide services at a minimum to include:

- a. Overdose Prevention and Supervised Injection;
- b. Housing and health referral;
- c. Access to water and sanitation;
- d. Security of person and property;
- e. Adequate and frequent garbage removal;
- f. Options for sober living; and
- g. COVID-19 safety protocols and access to testing;

FURTHER THAT Disaster Relief Shelter(s) are time bound for six months;

AND FURTHER THAT Disaster Relief Shelter(s) are provided as a way to facilitate decampments in Vancouver Parks, and specifically Strathcona Park.

- E. THAT Council direct staff to work with BC Housing and Vancouver Coastal Health to develop:
 - a. An intake and referral process that addressed most critical unsheltered needs;
 - b. Rules and standards of operation;
 - c. Best practice maximum limit of individuals per Disaster Relief Shelter; and
 - d. Conditions of residence that ensure safety, security, respect and dignity for all.

- F. THAT Council direct staff to work with Engineering, VPD and other agencies to establish a 300 metre radius “bubble zone” around the location(s) to increase support and services to help mitigate any ancillary camping, litter, disorder, criminal activity or other impacts to improve integration with adjacent businesses and residents;

FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to clearly articulate the plan and process to adjacent businesses and residents, as well as a feedback mechanism and good neighbour agreement.

- G. THAT the Mayor on behalf of Council requests BC Housing begin a process of diverting and enhancing resources currently deployed to unsanctioned encampments to support Disaster Relief Shelter(s) on City site(s).

- H. THAT the Mayor on behalf of Council and the City of Vancouver request support of Provincial and Federal governments to supply operating funds for supporting Disaster Relief Shelter(s) that provide unsheltered people with access to health services and housing.

- I. THAT the Mayor on behalf of Council informs Police and Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation respectively of this intention and as a new protocol to locate unsheltered campers in parks and public realm to Disaster Relief Shelter(s).

- J. THAT Council direct staff to work with Vancouver Coastal Health, the First Nations Health Authority and other agencies to explore opportunities and funding for health and resiliency services for residents in the shelters (such as Mental Health First Aid and Mental Health First Aid First Nations courses) so that they may learn and have conversations about mental health and explore ways to cope with crisis, including COVID-19, and to restore balance on the journey to mental health and wellness.

- K. THAT Council confirms that the long term solutions for the homelessness and housing disaster require the supply of sufficient affordable, safe and secure housing and will continue to work collaboratively, diligently and with urgency with senior governments and other partners to achieve the needed supply.

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1. [https://d3n8a8pro7vmtx.cloudfront.net/pivotlegal/pages/939/attachments/original/1445459740/Chief Justice Hinkson re Abbotsford \(City\) v. Shantz 10-21.pdf?1445459740](https://d3n8a8pro7vmtx.cloudfront.net/pivotlegal/pages/939/attachments/original/1445459740/Chief Justice Hinkson re Abbotsford (City) v. Shantz 10-21.pdf?1445459740)