



North Park Neighbourhood Association
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Re: Status of Sheltering in Parks: a call for engagement and communication

Attention: Mayor, Council, Shannon Perkins (Bylaw), Thomas Soulliere, Nav Sidhu (Parks), Bill Eisenhauer, Sheldon Johnson (Engagement)
CC: NPNA Board, NPNA Land Use Advisor
Date: October 20, 2020

It has been more than a month since new bylaws were passed that were intended to alleviate the overcrowding currently taking place in Central Park and other Victoria parks. We understand that progress is being made and there is excellent work being done by the Bylaws department in terms of developing collaborative relationships with unhoused members of the community.

However, Central Park, which has space for 21 tents, remains at 90+ tents. We continue to hear from North Park residents who are angry, frustrated and afraid of using their parks. Residents' feelings of being unsafe and displaced from community spaces are compounded by the fact that so little information is being communicated by the City to the public.

The distributed approach to sheltering promised by the City has not led to any significant changes in the overcrowding at Central Park or reduced the negative impacts of the situation in the North Park neighbourhood. Asking people to be patient and more compassionate is no longer working. There is also a very real deadline imposed by nature. The rains are coming and Central Park is going to turn into a mud pit. Needles and garbage are going to be churned into the mud and it's not clear how this will be able to be fixed without losing Central Park to a long and expensive remediation, it is clear however that Central Park will become uninhabitable.

For the past few months, the NPNA have been demonstrating what we believed to be a solutions-based style of collaboration on a very complex, ultimately national, issue. We have been trying a new, more compassionate made-in-North-Park approach, with our hearts and ears open. We have been responding to the immediate needs of unhoused community members while taking into account the needs of housed community members. We have been highlighting the systemic failures of the provincial and federal government. In the absence of any updates or communication from the City, we have been trying to fill the void in services and communication.

However, our grassroots and collaborative efforts are meaningless if people remain unhoused this winter without proper sanitation and support. Worse, it will be seen as a failure of the cooperative



approach. Residents in North Park need immediate action to reduce the number of shelters in Central Park, along with regular communication from the City about the next steps and timelines.

Recommendations:

- Take action to reduce the overcrowding at Central Park. Enact the distributed model as agreed upon by Council to reduce sheltering to the total of 21 tents for Central Park
- Establish a timeline for achieving these actions outlined and provide updates to the NPNA on a regular (proposed: weekly) basis on the progress made on achieving the timeline objectives
- Set and communicate a deadline for bringing unhoused individuals in all parks into compliance with the bylaws
- Provide regular updates to the public on the progress and status of sheltering in all parks, including weekly structure counts and Bylaw priorities
- Pressure the province to use the Oak Bay Lodge or other facilities for immediate indoor accommodation

Respectfully submitted by,

North Park Neighbourhood Association

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