



February 24, 2021

Mayor Lisa Helps
City of Victoria
#1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC

RE: North Park Neighbourhood Association's request to immediately add Central Park to the list of parks where sheltering is prohibited

Dear Mayor and Council:

The Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA) wholly supports the North Park Neighbourhood Association's request to immediately add Central Park to the list of parks where sheltering is prohibited.

This year ICA is marking fifty years of providing myriad services to newcomer immigrants and refugees and working through multiple programming to build a welcoming and inclusive community for immigrants and racialized peoples. Although we operate throughout the Capital Region our main offices have been in the North Park Neighbourhood for over twenty-three years. Central Park has been a civic amenity we have used to introduce newcomers to community recreation, host lantern festivals, immigrant youth and seniors active programming and to celebrate language class graduations with potluck picnics. Many newcomers live in the neighbourhood and access the park regularly and through our programming we have encouraged them to do so.

The North Park Neighbourhood has disproportionately borne the burden of homelessness which the NPNA has clearly set out in its communications with Mayor and Council. Tents in Central Park remove access to green space for the many newcomers who live in the neighbourhood and access services at ICA. Especially in COVID times, when we are supporting families through significantly increased stress, mental health issues and intensified domestic violence it is important that families be able to recreate healthily and safely outside of close apartment living. Whether objectively unsafe or not, encampments create a perception that one is trespassing when walking through the space - let alone setting up picnic blanket or letting little children run off their pent-up energy.

ICA urges Mayor and Council to recognize Central Park as an unsuitable location for both 7pm to 7am and 24/7 sheltering.

Sincerely

Jean McRae
CEO