



City of Victoria COVID-19 Update

Date: Friday, September 11, 2020

For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC — Victoria City Council continues to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic and explore ways to support residents and local businesses.

Yesterday, City Council finalized amendments to its Parks Regulation Bylaw regarding sheltering in parks. To be adopted on Monday, the bylaw amendments will limit the size of temporary shelters in parks to three metres by three metres, and require a four-metre distance between shelters to reduce density and improve emergency access. There will also be an eight-metre buffer zone around playgrounds where sheltering is prohibited and a 50-metre buffer around school properties. Open flame appliances and combustibles will also be restricted.

“The additional distance is especially important as we see the number of COVID-19 cases on the rise and additional health orders limiting our interactions with one another,” said Mayor Lisa Helps.

New locations have been added to the list of Victoria parks where sheltering is restricted, including Summit Park, Moss Rock Park, MacDonald Park, South Park, Robert Porter Park, David Spencer Park, as well as City garden beds and community gardens.

“Sheltering in parks is not an ideal solution for anyone. Given that we are still in a provincial state of emergency, it is important to note that these are emergency measures. The bylaw is written so that daytime sheltering will end 30 days after the state of emergency ends,” said Mayor Helps.

The Community Wellness Alliance, co-chaired by Mayor Lisa Helps and Island Health, is working hard to identify indoor spaces that will be available over the next four to six months. Using the region’s Coordinated Access and Assessment process, the Alliance meets weekly to match people without homes with appropriate housing and corresponding supports. Members include Island Health, BC Housing, Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness, Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness, Our Place, VicPD, representatives from provincial ministries and City staff.

“The City cannot solve homelessness on its own. We are not housing nor healthcare providers, which is why working with our community partners is key to solving this issue,” said Mayor Helps. “As co-chair of the Alliance’s Decampment Working Group, I can tell you that there is a committed group of people at that table. Over the past two weeks, we have moved nine people indoors. While this work may be slow, it will continue.”

Earlier this week, the City announced the finalists for the 2020 Victoria Book Prizes. The annual \$5,000 City of Victoria Butler Book Prize and the \$5,000 City of Victoria Children’s Book Prize recognize local literary talent. Winners will be announced at the Victoria Book Prize Society’s virtual gala on Sunday, October 4 at 7 p.m. Tickets are free but must be reserved in advance. To learn more, visit: victoriabookprizes.ca.

The Mayor’s Facebook Live COVID-19 updates take place on Fridays at 1 p.m. For more information on the City’s response and recovery to the pandemic, visit: victoria.ca/covid19response.

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