



City and Province Working to Move People from Central Park Due to Flooding

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For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC — Due to the effects of the recent heavy rain and snow, many areas of Central Park have flooded. While people sheltering in the park wait for additional indoor space to be opened by BC Housing, the City is making the parking lot at Royal Athletic Park available for sheltering. As part of this emergency response, the BC Housing and the City are providing everyone with a new tent and fresh bedding. As needed, warm and dry supplies will also be delivered to other parks.

“With the recent heavy rainfall, the situation in Central Park has become untenable for those sheltering. As the cold and wet weather continues to make sheltering in parks more challenging, the City is actively working with its partners to secure more safe spaces for people to stay warm and dry, by March 31 at the latest,” said Mayor Lisa Helps. “In the meantime, we are grateful to everyone who has mobilized to help move people camping to firmer ground that won’t flood. I’d especially like to thank BC Housing for their continued support.”

The Victoria Fire Department has a stock of replacement tents and cots which they have graciously offered for the campers. BC Housing will fund additional tents and bedding if there is a shortage of supply.

BC Housing and the GSL Group recently began discussions on reusing the Save-on-Foods Memorial Centre as a temporary shelter for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Victoria, but no firm decisions have been made at this time. In Victoria, BC Housing funds 641 spaces to address people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including hotels, emergency response centres, and year-round and temporary shelters.

Addressing homelessness has been a top priority for the provincial government since day one, and the recent storm and pandemic have further highlighted the importance of providing safe and secure accommodation. The City supports the Province’s efforts and values their partnership.

The ongoing pandemic has reduced access to indoor shelters and supports for people experiencing homelessness. Due to physical distancing requirements, shelters are not able to offer the same number of beds they normally do and there are no Emergency Weather Protocol beds available. There are many agencies that work closely with people experiencing homelessness to provide meals, medical care, and meet other immediate needs. The City is also investing in programs and services, including:

- Providing \$115,420 in grants to ensure people sheltering outdoors have access to showers and outreach services such as warm meals and clothing until the end of March 2021, including:
 - \$86,520 to the Salvation Army to establish a mobile shower trailer that will circulate five days per week
 - \$22,400 to the Umbrella Society for Addictions and Mental Health to deliver community care and meals
 - \$6,500 for a community care tent that can manage donated goods and provide basic health services

- Funding expanded shower hours at Our Place Society on Pandora Avenue to 13 hours daily, 7 days a week
- Extending public washroom hours with enhanced cleaning to ensure everyone has access to safe hygiene

In addition, bylaw officers are in parks daily to do health checks and work closely with community organizations and peers to share information about services available in the community. A [Temporary Sheltering in Parks handout](#) is available from bylaw officers and on the City's website indicating locations for shelter, food, showers and other services. Bylaw officers are also working to get people registered for the BC Housing assessment list.

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