



## Council Report For the Meeting of March 4, 2021

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**To:** Council **Date:** February 18, 2021  
**From:** Thomas Soulliere, Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities  
**Subject:** Parks Regulation Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw (No. 10) Amendment Bylaw  
No. 20-114

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### RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council adopt the *Parks Regulation Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw (No. 10) Amendment Bylaw No. 20-114*.
2. That Council instruct the City Solicitor to bring forward bylaw amendments necessary to continue the permanent prohibition on sheltering in Centennial Square and Central Park in time for adoption prior to March 31, 2021.
3. That Council instruct the City Solicitor to bring forward bylaw amendments necessary to continue the temporary regulations regarding location, size, and distancing of shelters to continue until the end of the pandemic in time for adoption prior to March 31, 2021.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2009, the *Parks Regulation Bylaw (Attachment A)* has allowed for individuals experiencing homelessness in Victoria to shelter from dusk to dawn in the City's parks. In the Spring of 2020, based on public health recommendations, the City suspended enforcement of the prohibition on daytime sheltering in parks to allow sheltering in place. Given the COVID-19 pandemic's serious health risks, sheltering in place was seen as a necessary measure to promote physical distancing, reduce health risks and maintain connections with service providers.

In September 2020, Council amended the *Parks Regulation Bylaw* to temporarily allow shelters in municipal parks during daytime hours subject to certain specific rules regarding size, distancing, and location. These temporary provisions (section 16B) are set to expire 30 days after the end of the provincial state of emergency related to COVID-19 pandemic. There are approximately 180 to 200 shelters in City parks currently.

In November 2020, Council passed a multi-part motion (Attachment B) focused on finding temporary and long-term housing solutions by March 31, 2021 for people sheltering in parks. Council directed staff to bring forward amendments repealing the temporary daytime sheltering provisions in the *Parks Regulation Bylaw* (section 16B) effective March 31, 2021.

At Council direction, staff brought forward *Parks Regulation Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw (No. 10) Amendment Bylaw No. 20-114 (Attachment C)* for Council consideration on November 26, 2020.

The proposed bylaw amendment sets the repeal of the temporary daytime sheltering allowance to March 31, 2021. Council postponed consideration of the amendment bylaw to the first daytime Council meeting in March 2021, at which point it would have clearer understanding of whether the temporary and long-term housing solutions deadline was going to be met on schedule.

Over the past several months, the City has worked closely with the Province and other partners towards the goal of securing indoor housing options for everyone sheltering in parks. The Province has now confirmed that indoor housing options will be available for everyone currently sheltering in parks by March 31, 2021.

Notwithstanding the proposed repeal of the temporary daytime sheltering effective March 31, it is proposed that the regulations regarding the maximum shelter size, spacing of shelters, and distance from pathways and other areas be maintained at least for the duration of the pandemic. Therefore, the Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities recommends that Council instruct the City Solicitor to bring forward amendments that would keep those temporary regulations at least until the end of the Provincial state of emergency.

As part of the temporary adjustments to the *Parks Regulation Bylaw*, Centennial Square and Central Park have been added to the list of parks where sheltering is prohibited at all times. However, both these parks are scheduled to be automatically removed from that list at the same time the other temporary provisions are set to expire (i.e., 30 days after the expiry of the provincial state of emergency or, if Bylaw 20-114 is adopted, on March 31, 2021). Council has requested that staff bring forward the long-term sheltering recommendation for these two parks as part of this report. As described in previous staff reports (Attachments D and E), staff recommend having Centennial Square and Central Park continue to be areas where sheltering is permanently prohibited. Therefore, it is recommended that Council instruct the City Solicitor to bring forward bylaw amendments necessary to achieve that.

Upon Council adoption, staff will communicate to those still sheltering in parks that the bylaw will be changing as of March 31, 2021. This information will also be shared with service providers, public safety partners, neighbourhood associations and other stakeholders.

## **CONCLUSION**

The City, in partnership with the Province and many external service providers, has made significant progress towards the goal of securing indoor housing options. Achieving this goal is a significant step towards providing more effective access to necessary assistance and services for unhoused individuals than they can receive when sheltering in parks. With the Province set to offer housing options for all individuals experiencing homelessness by March 31, 2021, staff propose adding Central Park and Centennial Square to the list of areas permanently prohibited from sheltering and continuing rules regarding location, size and distancing of shelters until the end of the pandemic.

Respectfully submitted,

Navdeep Sidhu  
Assistant Director

Thomas Soulliere  
Director

**Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager.**

## **List of Attachments**

**Attachment A:** Parks Regulation Bylaw

**Attachment B:** Council Motion re: finding temporary and long-term housing solutions for people sheltering in parks

**Attachment C:** Parks Regulation Bylaw, Amendment Bylaw (No. 10) Amendment Bylaw No. 20-114

**Attachment D:** September 3, 2020 Committee of the Whole Report - City Response to Sheltering During the Pandemic

**Attachment E:** January 21, 2021 Committee of the Whole Report - Proposed Updates to Parks Regulation Bylaw