

you the full extent of our experience living on the NE corner of Topaz Park for more than five years. There have been verbal threats, theft, menacing dogs, extended shouts and profanities, even throughout the night. The latest shock has been the encampment on the edge of the beautiful new skateboard park where the young and vulnerable tend to gather. And the astonishing amount of litter!

I was in favour of the extended encampment in the NW corner of the park before the creation of the skateboard area because of the pandemic. It made sense because the space was not being used and it would allow for medical care and meals and perhaps a sense of community. But I was not prepared for the air of threat that came into the entire park. Weeks of caution and avoidance extended into months and until recently, into years. Please, please ban sheltering in Topaz Park. I yearn for the freedom to enjoy Victoria's largest sports park - the family gatherings, youth at play and the laughter of children."

225 Russell Street BC Housing Shelter: During a recent rezoning application public hearing, Council heard from residents who live across the street from a BC Housing facility that had previously been an indoor temporary shelter for approximately two years.

Residents told Council of their experiences during those years, including the following from one representative of the housing co-op across the street:

"Since the shelter was put in place, the disruption in the neighbourhood has been traumatic. The level of violence both physical and psychological has been like nothing I've ever experienced since I've moved there. I've been targeted and intimidated for going to shelter staff, Our Place shelter staff, by shelter residents and their friends for raising concerns with the shelter staff. I've witnessed countless drug deals as well as a man launching himself on the top of the courtyard fence to ask people down the block if they want to purchase GHB because he's got some for sale. I've witnessed violent altercations in the middle of the street between men during the hours children are coming home from school, doing their homework and getting ready for dinner, as well as in the early hours like two A.M. I've personally been threatened with a knife as I was minding my own business gardening. I had a very angry woman wander into my driveway telling me "you better watch your back, I know where you live", and she really did. That last incident, a staff member, an Our Place staff member, told me to just stay away from her, keeping in mind I was in my own driveway; I never left my driveway. All of the incidents happened to me personally and involved people living at the shelter at the time or had just been removed from the shelter. In addition to those incidents, other members have had individuals come up to them on the sidewalk when they were just standing there talking to each other and threatened to murder them. One of our members, [of the co-op] a sweet senior woman, who is long past the age of retirement but is still working was on her way to her vehicle early in the morning on her way to work and was met with a tall man standing in the dark by our bicycle storage and was so terrified, she had to run into the bushes to get away. One young teenager looked outside her window to see a man staring at her from the street and who didn't seem bothered at all that he had just been noticed. There have been screaming fights between people in the middle of the night that jolted our members from their sleep. The particularly traumatic ones were when a man violently assaulted his girlfriend who was living in the shelter at the time. This was a regular occurrence, and one of our members was so disturbed by the violence that they began sleeping in their bedroom closet so they wouldn't have to be exposed to it. Picture a woman who's just fled an abusive situation and has moved into a stable, safe home, and all of a sudden violence explodes outside of her bedroom window. We have had people in the night with flashlights making their way through our backyards to get to our secure bike

storage. We've had people cut through our chain link fences to steal bikes and then bring them out to the street and proceed to take them apart on the street. We've had vehicles broken into, we've had mail boxes broken into. The end of our street, where rainbow park is, has become the go to spot to go and buy and sell drugs and consume them. I no longer walk my dogs there after dark, and during the day if I go down there I find human feces and discarded needles."

Tiny Town: During the last two years, a fully enclosed temporary housing facility has been established in the parking lot bordered by Green Street, Caledonia Avenue and Vancouver Street. The housing units are made of sea canisters and the facility is called Tiny Town. It has considerable restrictions, not allowing guests inside and with a security guard stationed in and around a shed immediately outside the facility. A resident who lives on one of the streets bordering Tiny Town wrote to Council in May 2023, noting some of her and her neighbours' experiences. Below is some of what she sent to Council:

"The promises made to us have never come through and...here is why:

- Security - is very limited if anything at all. The security provided is never, ever proactive and rarely responds to any incidents happening around our neighbourhood.
- Who to call sheet [a document listing where people can call when issues arise] - each and every time, this is us having to respond to some horrendous incident and rarely does it lead to anything.
- Our Place's [the service provider] response - if there is any disorder, violence, crime or other disruptive behaviours outside the sea canisters, Our Place says it is not their responsibility.
- To give you an example of what we're dealing with, recently, a woman was on our property in the middle of the afternoon. She just opened the gate and walked right in. I just happened to open the front door and heard a voice coming from the driveway. I leaned over the deck railing and there she was, high as a kite, chattering away. I shoed her out, and there just happened to be a security guard walking towards my house, so I let her deal with the woman, whom at this point was yelling about all sorts of stuff. Earlier in the day, someone else had left a black garbage bag full of garbage on the sidewalk (Parking lot side). The woman walked over to it, picked it up, and dumped it all over the sidewalk. The whole time the security lady just watched. Garbage sat there for several more hours and later it was my husband who went over with a wheel barrow and shovel and cleaned it up. One of my neighbours down the street said the same woman was going through stuff in her yard too.
- Another day, I left my house to go to a friend's two blocks away, and sitting in the Adirondack chairs [at the corner of Vancouver & Green] were a guy and girl smoking their drugs, while a 3rd guy stood there swaying, as he was already high. I decided to let the security guard know, so I knocked on the booth. Security guy was on his phone. I told him about people in chairs and their drug smoking. He said he can't do anything, only give them a warning. I said could you please give them a warning then. I walked away, but kept turning around to see if he would go over to the drug smokers. He did not.
- There was a woman a few weeks ago who stood on the corner for several hours, yelling, either very high or some kind of disorder.
- Random statements, things like "gang rape, and get me a pizza", this went on for hours. Not once did a security guard check on this person. Frank came back a couple days ago (he was the guy last summer who blared his music so loud it was all I could hear in my kitchen and he was around for 2 weeks). Thankfully he was

only around for maybe an hour. He stood at the corner yelling for at least 10 minutes about bylaw not letting people camp on boulevards and other random stuff.

- The tents started to pop up again. Which I don't understand. I thought BC Housing or Our Place was going to make sure no camping happened, that our neighbourhood would have security and feel safe. For several nights, there's been a tent that goes up beside the sea canisters. There seems to be no security. Shouldn't someone be telling people they are not allowed to camp in residential neighbourhoods? There have been tents at the corner of Vancouver and Pembroke, Royal Athletic Park side lawn as well. My husband is always diligent to send bylaw messages about the tents, he gets blanket emails back.
- People still use the corner of the sea canisters to pee at and daily people are passed out in the chairs or smoking their drugs in public."

This was the same woman who told Councillor Hammond earlier in the year how she and her husband woke up in the middle of the night to a person standing at the end of their bed, in their bedroom. He had broken into their basement window.

Days ago, this same woman wrote Councillor Hammond, with a long list of similar problems for her and her neighbours. She concluded in part, "All of this causes stress. With BC Housing and Our Place trying to solve one problem they have created misery for an entire neighbourhood. We live in fear of what will happen next. I can tell I'm on edge, I don't usually yell at people. I don't want to live like this, I don't want to feel this way. I want these people to have real help and not be stumbling around high in our neighbourhoods. This whole situation has become normalized. This is not normal, it's not right, it's deeply sad."

While the Province of BC, through BC Housing, is working diligently to house people who are unhoused, it is not yet enough and it may never be enough. Until people get into stable housing, with real supports, other residents of Victoria are left with many negative consequences, as noted in the examples noted above. There are many more examples this Mayor and Council have heard since November 2022.

The Province should be responsible for the negative behaviour outside their facilities and the City should be responsible for the negative behaviour from sheltering in parks and on city streets. Until the Province provides, and pays for, proper protections of its residents, the City should step up and give greater protection for its residents and businesses.

The City is gradually reducing the number of parks where overnight sheltering is allowed, which may reduce negative behaviours in some neighbourhoods while concentrating negative behaviours in others. When there is negative behaviour that affects people of Victoria, the City must respond and protect its residents.

City staff should seek advice from Police on ways to increase and enhance protections, either through police services, private security firms, or a combination.

After consultation with police, City staff could suggest to Council an amount and source for funds to pay for these security services. Some options might be the City's Contingency Fund and/or the City's Financial Stability Reserve.

Recommendation

That Council direct staff to advise Council on costs and sources to pay for adequate security in Victoria neighbourhoods negatively affected by crime and disorder arising from certain sheltering sites and supportive housing facilities.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor Stephen Hammond

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen Hammond", written in a cursive style.