



Council Member Motion
For the Committee of the Whole Meeting September 28, 2023

To: Committee of the Whole

Date: 28 September 2023

From: Councillor Krista Loughton, Councillor Jeremy Caradonna, Councillor Susan Kim

Re: Continued Actions on Unsheltered Homelessness

BACKGROUND

Unsheltered homelessness is an untenable situation that is beyond the breaking point in Victoria, and alleviating it is a top priority for the City. The situation is multifaceted and negatively affects people and systems, and the status quo is not working for anyone. We must forge a new way forward that supports the unhoused, housed residents, community organizations, and businesses alike. A functional approach to sheltering will decrease pressure on the people and systems impacted by unsheltered homelessness.

Earlier this year, Council took decisive action on sheltering in parks by hiring a Parks Relocation Coordinator (PRC) to work with the unhoused and offer them better sheltering or housing arrangements as a precondition for closing specific parks to overnight sheltering. This motion would build on that work by adding additional parks to the list of prohibited sheltering sites, and by extending the work of the PRC. The early indications are that this work has been successful and offers a model to build upon. The idea is to avoid shuffling people around and instead to find true solutions for getting people off the street. The Parks Relocation Coordination team will then repeat this process in other City parks and locations where unsheltered homelessness is occurring.

In addition, we propose replacing Extreme Weather Response (EWR) shelters with temporary seasonal shelters. EWR Shelters are problematic to run, partly because of their on/off nature and connections to unpredictable weather. This year we propose that the number of EWR spots allocated for Victoria be converted into temporary shelters from November 1 - March 31, 2024. This predictability would make things easier on those experiencing homelessness and on those running the shelters, while potentially limiting stress and disorder as people will have a warm place to sleep all winter indoors.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council direct staff to:

- work in collaboration with Emergency Management B.C. (EMBC), B.C. Housing, other provincial partners, and relevant churches and NGOs to transform the Extreme Weather

Response (EWR) shelters into temporary shelters for the winter, which would operate annually from approximately November 1st until March 31st;

- prohibit sheltering in Vic West Park and Irving Park, conditional upon offers of better sheltering or housing, by 1 June 2024, for those sheltering in these two parks as of 21 September 2023;
- and allocate, at the discretion of the City Manager, a portion of available funds set aside for homelessness in the 2023 budget towards extending the contract of the Parks Relocation Coordinators to work on the above.

Respectfully submitted,



Councillor Krista Loughton



Councillor Jeremy Caradonna



Councillor Susan Kim