# Council Member Motion For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of November 9, 2023

**To:** Committee of the Whole **Date:** November 3, 2023

From: Councillor Dave Thompson

**Subject:** Future sheltering and relocation

# **Background**

Victoria City Council is moving forward on responding to homelessness and on sheltering in parks, streets, boulevards and other places.

These are clearly areas of provincial responsibility. The province has acknowledged this responsibility, and is funding it and working on it. The work has begun, but it is not being rolled out quickly enough, and so the City has had to step in - temporarily - to address immediate needs.

## **Relocation Coordinator**

One action the City has taken, pursuant to a Council motion, is to hire a Relocation Coordinator service to engage with people experiencing homelessness, understand their individual needs, and match them with suitable housing and supports.

This service has been operated by Pacifica Housing – a reputable organization with good staffing and a wide range of experience and operations in successfully addressing homelessness and providing supportive housing and affordable housing.

Pacifica has done an excellent job. A number of people who were sheltering in parks have already been housed, and in the November 2, 2023 Committee meeting, the Director of Bylaw Services advised that the most recent count of shelters in the four parks subject to recent bylaw amendments was:

Topaz: 2Stadacona: 0Regatta: 0Hollywood: 0.

As the Relocation Coordinator service has successfully connected more people with shelters and housing, Council has extended their funding. However, there are many other places (parks, streets, boulevards, etc.) where people are sheltering.

### No-sheltering list

Sheltering in parks is not the way for homelessness to be managed, and another action that the City has taken is to gradually expand the number of parks on the no-sheltering list, subject to the Relocation Coordinator connecting people to better sheltering or housing options. There are more

than 20 parks already on the no-sheltering list, 1 and the four noted above are being added to that list.

As the number of parks where sheltering is allowed shrinks, the need for more careful analysis grows. The City needs to look even more closely at capacity, locations, and other factors to ensure we are complying with legal obligations and treating people humanely. Staff will be presenting such an analysis.

The no-sheltering list will continue to evolve over time, guided by proper analysis. The list will hopefully be getting longer as more people are connected with better sheltering and housing options.

#### Conclusion

These actions that the City has temporarily undertaken need to be taken over by programs under Belonging in BC - as soon as possible.

In the meantime, in addition to further funding the Relocation Coordinator service, Council can provide direction to expand its operations to support more people who are sheltering to find better shelter and housing options. Council can also have staff provide analysis and advice on further sequencing of locations for sheltering in order to ensure the decisions made are the right decisions.

#### Recommendations

That Council direct staff to:

- work with the Relocation Coordinator to continue that work in other locations (e.g. parks, streets, boulevards, etc.) based on staff's assessment of needs, court decisions, etc.; and,
- bring forward recommendations to Council in relation to where sheltering should be allowed or not allowed in parks, streets, boulevards and other locations.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor Dave Thompson

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> https://www.victoria.ca/home-property/housing/homelessness-initiatives/sheltering-parks