

Sheltering Solutions Workshop

Being unable to attend, **Personal information** wish to have our voice heard regarding this topic.

Persona first contacted the city regarding the tenters; their use of needles, human waste, and a confrontation, about a year ago. At that point we decided it was no longer safe for her to walk on the paths in the park.

This summer as a result of the “Two alternatives the City identified ... designated temporary sheltering (tenting) areas in City parks, and a micro-housing village”, we have seen a greater number of tenters, plus tarps in the parks.

Being relatively new to Victoria, we are not familiar with the geography nor building possibilities. But we have tried to educate ourselves, especially regarding tenting in the parks. In reading the Rules for Overnight Shelter in Victoria Parks. A homeless man in the newspaper is quoted as saying: “You (the City) make it easy for us” - so we do need to look at the issue of “The Rules”. As parents of **Personal information**, we know that if rules are put in place, then there needs to be consequences for breaking the rules.

Our first suggestion: You MUST ENFORCE THE RULES that you have put in place or you lose control of the situation. And maybe we are at that point now.

1. Recreational camping is not permitted would imply that transients need to be identified. Every camper **must register** to set up a tent, just as in a public campground. This would help identify *transients, mental health patients, substance abusers*. Potentially, a great summer job for third and fourth year university students.
2. “Only if a shelter bed is not available” - (I believe the ruling is “a shelter mat”) - enforce the letter of the law.
3. **Evening park patrol** should be in place ensuring that the tenters have registered and have not set up tents in those areas as outlined: A temporary shelter is not permitted on, or near, any paths, playgrounds, sports fields, flower beds, long grass, in an area that is being used for an event, a cemetery or anywhere that is considered environmentally sensitive. Also, enforce the rule: Open flame (e.g., lighter, camp fire, candle) and smoking are not permitted.

Our second suggestion: There MUST be consequences for breaking the rules.

These suggestions only apply to the tenters and we know that there are many who prefer to sleep on the street. Many who do not want to sleep in any shelter. But we have to start somewhere, so let's start by not “making it easy” in Victoria, just because we have a milder climate.

Our third suggestion:

1. Contact cities who have had success in dealing with their homeless.
2. Neighbouring municipalities create a support system to deal with the problem.
3. Determine basic needs services for the mentally ill.
4. Determine which services “enable” street people.

It was when we checked online for the ‘who’ and the ‘what’ services that are being provided, we became disturbed. We questioned the stewardship of money given to organizations such as

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The CoolAid Society and Our Place. We questioned at what point is the Church Community helping or enabling.

Our fourth suggestion: The team of 12 individuals that are selected to work on this issue enforce accountability for these organizations.

A possible fifth solution: The City step back and look to the downtown business community to grapple with the problem. Their businesses are being affected since tax paying people hesitate to venture downtown and street people do impact our tourism industry.

A number of years ago, the City of Kelowna had a similar problem with their downtown core being taken over on the summer weekends. Their solution to the community was simple: Let's Take Back Our Streets". Every weekend 100's of families were 'encouraged' to be strolling the streets. It was profitable for the business community, fun for the families, of little cost to the city, and very effective in reducing their problem.

In conclusion, we wish the Mayor and Council to know that we recognize the tremendous burden of this one issue, and there must be many. We know that legislating may never totally solve the problem as many people like their life style and don't want to be "helped". Also, we want you to know that you have been in our prayers every day these past two months. We pray for the families that the street people represent. There may be parents who have no idea where their son or daughter is. We pray for the by-law officers, the police, and city workers who deal with this issue every day. We are thankful for our parks, especially for the beauty of Topaz Park. And we are proud to attend a church where each week one of the council members is a focus of prayer.