

Hello municipal and provincial leaders,

Attached you will find a letter prepared by the Strathcona Residents Association, Strathcona Business Improvement Association, Produce Row Business Committee, Strathcona Community Safety Association, and Strathcona Community Policing Centre regarding the current homeless encampment at Strathcona Park. I have also copied and pasted the content of the letter below. We represent over 850 businesses and over 16,000 residents in Strathcona and it's with some urgency that we share our views with you. We await your response and action. If you desire speaking with us further, please reach out.

On behalf of the letter signatories,
Sincerely,
Theo Lamb, Executive Director, Strathcona BIA

June 25, 2020

Honourable John Horgan

Premier
Province of BC

Honourable Shane Simpson

Minister of Social Development and Poverty
Reduction
Province of BC

Honourable Selina Robinson

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Province of BC

Honourable Melanie Mark

Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training
Province of BC

Mayor Kennedy Stewart

City of Vancouver

Vancouver Park Board

Commissioners
City of Vancouver

Vancouver City Councillors

City of Vancouver

RE: An Appeal for Immediate Action in Strathcona Park

On behalf of organizations representing the residents and businesses of Strathcona, we are asking for urgent support and attention from the BC Provincial Government, the City of Vancouver, and the Vancouver Park Board to immediately clear Strathcona Park of its current encampment and identify a permanent site for campers, therefore bringing the cycle of displacement to an end.

As representatives of over 850 businesses and 16,470 residents living in and operating across the district and community of Strathcona, we must work to strike a balance between the needs and safety of both the campers themselves and the community that surrounds them. Our organizations operate with sincere respect and compassion for our city's current homeless

situation and all those impacted by it, and with continuing mission commitments to serve the disadvantaged and underprivileged in our midst.

Strathcona Park is unambiguously the wrong place for government, through inaction, to seemingly encourage and endorse acceptance of this ad-hoc campground. Our collective community experiences from Oppenheimer Park show us that, with even the best intentions demonstrated by community organizers and the campers themselves, violence, sexual assault, and crime are inevitable outcomes of a community constantly facing displacement under the lagging attention of all levels of government. The businesses and residents who directly surround Oppenheimer Park carried the costly burden of these community impacts and our concern is that this cycle is set to repeat itself at Strathcona Park.

Strathcona has long been deeply underserved in greenspace compared to other districts and communities in Vancouver. With Oppenheimer Park still out of commission, and summer arriving amidst a global pandemic, the need for greenspace has never been greater. This will be all the more critical as we approach BC's Phase 3 of pandemic reopening and the July 1st beginning of the city's recreational sports programming. The current encampment will inevitably grow beyond the bounds of any partition within Strathcona Park, and beyond the capacity of any internal, external or collaborative effort to manage it safely for all concerned. This will cripple opportunities for residents, employees of local businesses, gardeners, dog walkers, sports teams, children's daycamps and anyone seeking to enjoy the park space. Distancing guidelines mandated by the Office of the Provincial Health Officer underline the need to have large, accessible, local outdoor spaces available to community residents, employees, and visitors.

The issues are complex. So are the solutions - we acknowledge that safe, supportive housing is what's ultimately required and will not be quickly found or created. But this cycle of displacement of temporary encampments in our public parks must and can end with a city-sanctioned site for campers, where resources and support can be directed and the surrounding community can be mobilized to ensure the best outcomes for all those involved.

The community of Strathcona, which is in many respects part of the Downtown Eastside, is under no illusions regarding its responsibility to our city's most vulnerable citizens. We know we will be called upon to support our homeless community, time and again. We know that more housing is needed to support those who seek refuge in our city parks. We are asking our provincial and municipal government leaders not to shirk their formal responsibility in this matter. With appropriate will and resolve there are much better places to facilitate a stable, sustainable encampment until more enduring solutions can be implemented.

We await your response, as well as your action.

Sincerely,

Strathcona Residents Association
Strathcona Business Improvement Association
Produce Row Business Committee
Strathcona Community Safety Association
Strathcona Community Policing Centre

CC'd

Sadhu Johnson, City Manager, City of Vancouver
Paul Mochrie, Deputy City Manager
Shauna Wilton, Acting Parksboard General Manager, City of Vancouver

Daisy Chin, Director of Recreation, City of Vancouver
Steve Johnston, Community Impact Real Estate and Chair of Covid Community Recovery
Network
Tom Wanklin, Senior Planner, DTES, City of Vancouver
Peter Vaisboard, BIA Program Director, City of Vancouver
Sandra Singh, General Manager of Arts, Culture and Community Services, City of Vancouver
Celine Mauboules, Acting Managing Director, Homelessness Services and Affordable Housing
Programs
Chief Constable Adam Palmer, Vancouver Police Department

Contact:

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