



May 15, 2020

### **Campbell River preparing temporary space for safer camping on Homewood Road**

Work will soon begin to prepare a temporary site on Homewood Road that will support provincial public health orders and provide up to 25 appropriately-distanced camping sites for people experiencing homelessness in Campbell River.

The City intends to clear and grade the former BMX track, and make basic services available at that location, while provincial COVID-19 restrictions for physical distancing are in place.

The initiative is being developed with local social service organizations, including BC Housing. Plans are in the works to arrange for a local organization to manage and operate the site, and to provide as many support services as possible on site. Services could include regular meals, social supports and health services, including visits from doctors and nurse practitioners.

The City will provide preliminary information to nearby businesses and residents next week, including who to contact with any questions or concerns.

*"Around the world, people are trying their best to respond to the extremely challenging situation caused by this virus. The Province has asked communities across British Columbia to come up with initiatives that best address the local needs of people experiencing homelessness. The entire community benefits when we take action to protect our most vulnerable with this temporary safer camp location during the pandemic,"* said Mayor Andy Adams.

*"With limited local capacity to manage multiple emergency housing responses, community service organizations are pulling together to support people in a low-barrier, central location, where camping will be permitted and monitored to minimize the risk posed by this virus,"* said city manager Deborah Sargent. *"People are already camping in the woods and along trails in this area. Setting up a site that provides appropriate physical distancing will better protect the health of these vulnerable people and reduce the demand on our medical system. It could also help contain the potential spread of the virus by reducing the need to travel throughout the community each day seeking basic services."*

*"I am very encouraged by this holistic and compassionate response from the community and City of Campbell River,"* said North Island Medical Health Officer Dr. Charmaine Enns. *"COVID-19 is an increased risk for people who do not have the opportunity to self-isolate in a home so the provision of a location for supported camping is good for the individual and good for the community."*

Island Health and BC Housing have arranged for hotel stays if members of the vulnerable population require time in isolated accommodation due to potential exposure to the coronavirus.

Housing outreach workers continue to try to arrange suitable long-term accommodation for as many people as possible in Campbell River.

*"This continues to be extremely difficult given Campbell River's tight rental market and the number of people newly seeking rental accommodation following the apartment fire in April,"* added Mayor Adams. *"We deeply appreciate the partnerships with our community social service organizations and all the work they're doing to help with both immediate and longer-term solutions."*

In partnership with the City, BC Housing is currently leading two projects that will help provide long-term affordable housing solutions for Campbell River:

- An affordable housing project for women and children fleeing violence (40-50 units)
- Supportive housing (up to 50 units) with 24-hour support services, location to be confirmed

###

Contact: Deborah Sargent, City Manager

250-286-5740