

NEWS RELEASE

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Council responds to removal of homeless camp under Pearson bridge

Summary

Last week the Ministry of Transportation undertook slope stabilization work beneath the Pearson Bridge which displaced several individuals who had been camping there since November 2015. The campers were given nearly one month advance notice of the work and, in fact, had vacated the camp with their belongings and moved elsewhere before crews started work on the site. When they vacated the site the campers chose to leave a significant amount of refuse behind and these discarded items were removed by contractors working for the provincial government.

Since 2004, Mayor and Council of the City of Nanaimo have made reducing homelessness a key priority and they continue to work with our community and Provincial partners to address homelessness by the provision of emergency shelter and permanent, supported affordable housing options. Outreach services in the community attempted to offer support in accessing these housing options and other services but these offers were declined by those individuals residing under the bridge.

To learn more about the City of Nanaimo's Response to Homelessness Action Plan please visit the City website.

Strategic Link: n/a

Key Points

- The Pearson Bridge is under the jurisdiction of the Province of BC. The removal of the camp was due to safety maintenance that needed to be done on the banks around the bridge.
- The City has established three supportive housing facilities for the long term homeless in our community, two affordable housing projects and monthly rental supplements for homeless individuals who do not qualify for Supportive Housing so they can obtain and retain market housing.

Quotes

"The City of Nanaimo is progressive in it's response towards homelessness. The individuals in question had been contacted by services but chose not to make use of the resources offered; sad but within their right to do so."

Gordon Fuller
Councillor
City of Nanaimo

"Responding to the needs of those furthest from prosperity in our community is both a moral obligation and a pragmatic necessity; we all want to live in a community that takes care of its citizens and we all want to live in a community in which the public spaces of the city are accessible and welcoming to all residents and visitors. As such we will continue to work with our community partners to enhance services and supports to those without adequate shelter. "

John Horn
Social Planner
City of Nanaimo

Quick Facts

- A number of public health and safety concerns arose from the camp.
- On February 9, 2016 Nanaimo conducted its 6th Point in Time homeless count; a total of 174 people self identified as being homeless in Nanaimo.

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