

MEDIA RELEASE

City of Williams Lake



For Immediate Release

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450 Mart Street
Williams Lake, BC
V2G 1N3

City works with multiple agencies to disperse homeless encampment

Today, in consultation with various social service and health care agencies, and with support from the Williams Lake RCMP, the City of Williams Lake peacefully dispersed a homeless encampment at Herb Gardner Park. The camp was established early last week and quickly grew considerably in size, attracting more occupants, debris and activity daily.

"While we recognize this is not a perfect solution, we look forward to working with all of the appropriate agencies to establish a long-term solution for this ongoing issue," Chief Administrative Officer Gary Muraca said, noting he hopes collaborative work between organizations can begin immediately. "Our decision to disperse the encampment isn't one we took lightly. We are offering support to the individuals involved and have offered to store any belongings for the short term."

Open drug use and discarded needles, consumption of alcohol, public nudity, violent activity, defecation as well as its proximity to the Glen Arbor seniors housing complex adjacent to Herb Gardner Park were all factors in considering the camp's removal. "Community safety is our biggest concern at the moment," Muraca said.

Daily wellness checks and agency supports were on site in the park since the camp's initial set up. Currently, appropriate agencies are attempting to find shelter or housing spaces for the camp occupants.

"The City would like to thank the RCMP, Interior Health, the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction and Canadian Mental Health Association Cariboo Chilcotin Branch for their ongoing commitment to addressing this serious issue," Muraca said.

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