

City updating Parks Bylaw for the benefit of all users

(Penticton, BC – June 4, 2025) – The City of Penticton is updating its Parks Bylaw to provide clear guidelines for managing our local parks, beaches and trails for the years to come.

City Council will consider the proposed bylaw during a special meeting today, with a recommendation to refer the bylaw after its adoption to the Public Safety and Parks and Recreation advisory committees.

"Our 1974 Parks Bylaw does not meet the needs of the community," says Kristen Dixon, general manager of Infrastructure. "These updates will ensure our parks amenities – including, playgrounds, trails and sports fields – remain safe and accessible to all."

Among the changes, the bylaw provides new rules regarding overnight sheltering in parks and public spaces. This follows a line of B.C. court decisions which have found that people who do not have access to any form of indoor shelter cannot be prohibited from temporarily sheltering in public spaces. Municipalities may lawfully establish their own rules within the framework of these decisions and may designate specific areas where overnight sheltering is not allowed.

"First, let's be clear that recreational camping remains strictly prohibited in municipal parks," says Julie Czeck, general manager of Public Safety & Partnerships. "However, the courts have instructed that an outright prohibition on overnight sheltering in parks is unconstitutional and unenforceable. These updates will bring Penticton's bylaw in line with other cities across the province and remove any confusion among the community."

The proposed bylaw will prohibit temporary overnight sheltering along the two main lake frontages, including:

- Okanagan Beach, SS Sicamous Park and the Rose Garden
- Rotary Park, Gyro Park and Okanagan Lake Park
- Japanese Garden, Marina Way Park and Marina Way Beach
- Northern section of Lakawanna Park, located at 886 Lakeshore Drive W
- Skaha Lake Beach, Sudbury Beach and Skaha Lake Park

In addition, the proposed bylaw includes provisions that seek to balance the needs of the broader public with those sheltering in parks spaces, including:

- Sheltering is only permitted between the hours of 7 p.m. and 9 a.m. Shelters may not be erected, occupied or maintained outside of these hours.
- Shelters may not be located within:

- 15 metres of playgrounds
- 4 metres of trails, sports fields, environmentally or culturally sensitive areas
- 50 metres of any school property
- 15 metres from building entrances
- Shelters must be spaced at least four metres apart.
- Shelters and associated possessions must not occupy an area of more than 9 square metres.

The updates are part of the City's overall strategy to mitigate the effects of homelessness within our community.

- The City is actively working with local agencies, including 100 More Homes, the Penticton Indian Band and the Province to seek long-term solutions to homelessness, including the need for more supportive housing options and increased supports in the areas of mental health and addictions.
- The City is actively advocating for inclusion in the provincial Heart & Hearth initiatives, which provide housing options and support services for those who are unsheltered.
- The City approved the extension of the temporary winter shelter and is working on a Social Housing and Infrastructure Plan, as well as several housing initiatives including the Provincial Skaha Assembly site (~600 units), three City-owned sites for social housing, and a downtown Indigenous-focused affordable housing project.

For more information about the Parks Bylaw changes, as well as a Q&A and further details about Penticton's advocacy work involving homeless initiatives, visit penticton.ca/homeless.

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