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# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Council Approves Park's Bylaw**

**ABBOTSFORD, February 1, 2016** – Abbotsford City Council has adopted an updated Park's Bylaw, officially bringing the bylaw into alignment with the Supreme Court of British Columbia's October 2015 ruling, announced Mayor Henry Braun today.

On October 21, 2015, Supreme Court Justice, Christopher Hinkson issued a ruling that provides the ability for homeless persons to camp overnight in Abbotsford City Parks between the hours of 7pm and 9am, if there are no shelter beds available in the community. The ruling was based on the BC Court of Appeal ruling that was applied to the City of Victoria in 2009 (*Adams BCCA*).

The key updates to Abbotsford's Park's Bylaw include:

- A. Clarification of the definition of "Park" to confirm that lands defined as "Highways" under the Community Charter and/or in the City's Street and Traffic Bylaw are not included within the definition;
- B. Abbotsford has 157 Parks; camping will only be completely prohibited in three Parks that are currently defined/designated as "City-Wide Parks," all three of which are destination Parks that have year-round, high community use:
  1. Mill Lake Park
  2. Civic Precinct
  3. Abbotsford Exhibition Park
- C. Clarification that camping is not permitted under the following conditions in any Park:
  - In playgrounds, splash pads, pools, horticulture display areas or ornamental gardens;
  - In skateboard bowls, tennis courts and other sports pads, washroom facilities, picnic shelters or gazebos;
  - On sports fields, dugouts, stadiums, stages, bleachers, pathways, bridges, docks, and wharfs;
  - In areas of a park that have otherwise been issued a permit pursuant to this bylaw; and
  - At recreation facilities, cemeteries or golf courses.

At the time of the Court ruling, Abbotsford City Council committed to creating a made-in-Abbotsford response to the ruling that was in-line with the City's commitment to utilizing a Housing First approach toward homelessness in the community. Part of that made-in-Abbotsford solution included the opening of a 40-bed Temporary Response Shelter located on Riverside Road on December 21, 2015. The Temporary Response Shelter has seen a very positive response since opening its doors with a ninety-three (93) per cent overall occupancy rate and ninety (90) individuals receiving case-management services. To date, sixteen (16) people have been found permanent housing and have been relocated from the shelter into permanent housing situations, which according to the Housing First approach is the first step in ending the cycle of homelessness.

A copy of the full report and draft bylaw as presented to Council on January 25, 2016 can be found here: <http://www.abbotsford.ca/parkbylawreport>.

**Quotes from Mayor Henry Braun:**

“Now that the updates to the Park’s Bylaw have been adopted, the City will be asking our local service providers to focus their efforts on assisting any remaining campers on Gladys Road in finding alternate accommodations in keeping with our commitment toward Housing First solutions,” said Braun. “I would like to stress that this process is less about the City adhering to a strict timeline and more about ensuring that our service providers have the opportunity to work with these individuals.”

“Ensuring people have the opportunity to move towards housing holds true to our commitment to utilizing a Housing First approach in addressing homelessness in Abbotsford,” said Braun. “The issue of homelessness is extremely complex and requires all levels of government to participate in generating solutions. I look forward to continuing to work alongside our local, provincial and federal representatives in generating positive solutions for our community.”

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