

Fairfield Gonzales Community Association

Sheltering in the neighbourhood parks- a statement from our board

Homelessness is a serious, ongoing challenge, and it has become much more visible with sheltering in parks in communities across Canada and around the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic as shelters reduce capacity in order to maintain physical distancing. 24-7 sheltering in parks is not a long-term solution to the homelessness problem. It fails to serve the needs of the homeless and creates challenges for nearby residents.

Homelessness and sheltering outdoors need to be addressed through collaboration by all levels of government – municipal, regional, provincial and federal – with provision of housing, restoring funding for mental health care and facilities, addiction prevention and treatment, and more.

As a neighbourhood association, FGCA has no decision-making authority over homelessness or sheltering in parks. That authority rests with governments.

However, FGCA recognizes the legitimate and serious challenges with sheltering in parks - challenges felt by both the housed and the unhoused. FGCA wishes to do its part to improve the situation for all members of the neighbourhood – housed and unhoused. We are working with Victoria Community Association Network to call for sustainable, long-term solutions rather than reactive measures that result in shifting people from neighbourhood to neighbourhood.

Community members in Fairfield Gonzales and across Victoria have been acting to improve mutual communication and understanding of the challenges, and to supply needed humanitarian assistance. FGCA will work to support the actions of volunteers in our neighbourhood in the period remaining in which the City permits sheltering to take place due to the COVID-19 pandemic state of emergency.

If you have time and wish to volunteer to contribute to this work, ideas for solutions to specific issues, or items to donate, please get in touch with Virginie at event@fairfieldcommunity.ca.