



City of Maple Ridge News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Temporary Shelter Begins Operation

Maple Ridge, BC: On October 1, 2015 the temporary shelter located at 22239 Lougheed Highway opened. The shelter is being operated by RainCity Housing, an organization that has experience dealing with street-entrenched populations in urban areas of the Lower Mainland. The facility will operate for six months and will close on March 31, 2016.

“This is an important milestone. When the camp formed in May the people there told us that they had no alternative to camping outdoors. The City deployed an outreach team in the community who have been working tirelessly to connect people with shelter and other services. Even before the doors opened in the temporary shelter, over 30 people had been connected with shelter options. Now, finally, we have a place for the remaining people on Cliff Avenue to go,” said Maple Ridge Mayor Nicole Read. “Over the next week the outreach workers, supported by Police, Fire and City staff who have been interacting with the campers, will assist in relocating them to the shelter. We ask that people give everyone involved some time and space to end the camp in a dignified and orderly way.”

Mayor and City staff continue to meet with representatives of the Cliff Avenue businesses and property owners to keep them informed of the work, and to deal with any issues that arise.

“As we have approached the opening of the shelter business and property owners have demonstrated incredible reserve and patience as we move to restore the peace and quiet of their neighbourhood,” said Mayor Read. “This past weekend the neighbourhood and their supporters held a community gathering at Memorial Peace Park where they raised money and food donations for the Friends In Need Food Bank. I had the chance to attend the event and I

am confident that this neighbourhood will recover and be stronger than ever. The adversity that they have dealt with has forged strong connections between neighbours that you don't often see in this day and age. “

In preparation for the opening of the shelter there have been improvements to street lighting around the immediate area of the shelter. There will be increased private security throughout the six month period the shelter is open, and the Ridge Meadows RCMP have also developed, and are implementing, an enhanced response to ensure that all residents of the downtown feel secure during the brief period the shelter operates.

As we have seen with the focused work of the outreach team, it is possible to connect people with shelter and health services. During the six month operation of the shelter the team at RainCity will continue to work closely with outreach resources to connect people to more permanent solutions. We are confident that they have the ability and connections regionally to ensure that there is a smooth transition when the shelter closes in March.

For more information please contact Kelly Swift, General Manager: Community Development, Parks & Recreation Services at kswift@mapleridge.ca or by phone at 604-467-7337.