



City of Maple Ridge News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Saturday, February 23 19-08

For further information, contact:

communications@mapleridge.ca

Inspection of St. Anne Camp Site Begins

Maple Ridge, BC: On Friday, February 8 the BC Supreme Court granted the City of Maple Ridge the authority to address the long-standing fire and life-safety issues at the St. Anne site identified by both the Maple Ridge Fire Department and, more recently, the Provincial Fire Commissioner.

On Friday, February 22, when the Fire Department arrived at the site, the electrical service panel for the camp was exposed to the elements and the electrical connections were tampered with creating a significant life safety risk. BC Hydro was asked to turn off the power to the site due to the tampering. This has occurred on a number of occasions, and despite numerous warnings, the power supply to the camp continues to be tampered with creating a risk of electrocution.

In addition to the electrical panel tampering, the Fire Department personnel noticed the smell of propane in the area. An inspection of the fenced off area around the propane tanks supplying gas for the warning tent revealed that the lock had been cut and that one of the 80 lb tanks had been tampered with to refill small 20lb BBQ tanks. This represented an extreme fire hazard and the Fire Department called the gas supplier for a repair.

The propane supplier arrived on site and noted that this was not the first time that the tanks had been tampered with and elected to remove their tanks from the site. This action was not requested by the City.

The City will work with BC Housing to determine how these services can be restored in a safe fashion.

On Saturday, February 23, enforcement of the BC Supreme Court Order began with inspections of all of the tents and structures to remove ignition sources and accelerants that pose a life and fire safety hazard on the site.

Access to the site will be restricted to verified camp occupants, their legal counsel and housing support workers. The City will continue the work of identifying the owners of tents and structures.

A significant number of propane tanks were found and removed from the site. Other items that were found include propane BBQs, propane patio heaters, gas powered generators, a chain saw and gas lawn mower. The items were removed from the site and are being disposed of safely. *(Photos of some of the items found at the site are included at the end of the release).*

Once the site has been cleared of ignition sources and accelerants, work will begin to address the fire safety risks associated with the proximity of tents and structures to the fence, and to each other, to bring the site in compliance with the Court Order.

BC Housing continues to work with its community partners to engage campers and connect them to available shelter and housing options in the community.

Homes and businesses in the immediate neighbourhood received notification of potential disruptions to traffic on 223 Street as the work to enforce the Court Order progresses.

