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BC SOCIAL WORKERS CALL FOR COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO ENCAMPMENT CONCERNS

(Vancouver) BC's professional association for social workers recognizes the complexities of addressing concerns about the encampments on East Hastings and is calling for a more comprehensive, compassionate, and thoughtful approach by government agencies.

"Media stories and reports from front-line social and health agency staff are rightly critical of recent and ongoing attempts to decamp individuals from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside," said Michael Crawford, President of the BC Association of Social Workers. "Little to no warning or notice of the decampment effort, the use of police and security to enforce decampment, wide-spread disregard for personal property, and ironically, a lack of safe and secure alternative housing, combined to traumatize already vulnerable people."

The BCASW is calling on the City of Vancouver and the BC government to work with local social and health agencies and people with lived/living experience, to develop a comprehensive plan for responding to concerns about the encampments.

"It is absurd that people would be thrown out of their tents and other structures without a plan to provide safe, appropriate, and accessible housing," said Crawford. "Housing is just one of multiple issues needing attention. Many encamped along East Hastings have serious health concerns, mental health issues, and addictions that require culturally safe services urgently."

The BCASW echoes the calls for social justice made by the coalition of Downtown Eastside residents and organizations including Stop the Sweeps and supports their efforts. The BCASW continues to express concerns about the involvement of police in decampment efforts and the impact their presence can have on vulnerable people.

Contact:

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BC Association of Social Workers

BCASW acknowledges that our office is in the unceded territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations and that our members live and work in unceded territories across British Columbia. We also express appreciation to Métis and Inuit peoples across British Columbia.