



## Media Release

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON  
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Vernon, BC  
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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **City begins rollout of panhandling strategy**

The City of Vernon has begun the rollout of its panhandling strategy that was approved by Council at the June 13 meeting. This strategy was created by a task force that included Vernon councillors Juliette Cunningham, Catherine Lord and Scott Anderson; Annette Sharkey from the Social Planning Council of North Okanagan; and City staff from Protective Services, Corporate Services and Communications. The plan focuses on four components: kindness meters, median signage, targeted enforcement and public education.

The City has installed five kindness meters in the downtown area that are considered “hot spots” for panhandling. These meters provide an alternative for people who want to help members of our community without giving money directly to those who panhandle. All proceeds collected in the orange kindness meters are donated to agencies that provide services such as the John Howard Society, the Upper Room Mission and the Salvation Army.

The City has also installed signs on medians and roadways where panhandling is a concern. While panhandling is not illegal, panhandling to vehicles is, and is a violation of the B.C. Safe Streets Act and City bylaws. The City and RCMP will be targeting medians and roadways where these activities take place.

Additionally, bylaw officers will be targeting aggressive panhandlers. Aggressive panhandling is a violation of the Safe Streets Act and is considered any manner that is likely to cause a reasonable person to be concerned for their safety and security. These include actions such as threatening the person being solicited with physical harm; obstructing the path of the person being solicited; using profane or abusive language; proceeding behind, alongside or ahead of the person; soliciting while intoxicated; or continuing to solicit after a negative response has been given.

The final component of the strategy involves public education. Vernon residents care about each other and want to help others. However, giving money to panhandlers may not be the best way to help people as it can perpetuate the cycle of panhandling and

addiction. The City is creating signage and information pamphlets that discourage giving change to panhandlers in favour of donating to recognized local charities that offer services to homeless people in our community. The City will also be delivering presentations to various groups within Vernon to provide information about panhandling, the B.C. Safe Streets Act, and tips for how to respond when approached by panhandlers.

Aggressive panhandling should be immediately reported by calling 250-550-3505. For more information on panhandling, please visit [www.vernon.ca/panhandling](http://www.vernon.ca/panhandling).