

Occupy Fredericton gets marching orders; Deadline | Woodside tells protesters to get out of Phoenix Square by Jan. 1

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Mayor Brad Woodside has set Jan. 1 as the deadline for Occupy Fredericton protesters to pack up and get out of Dodge.

He and a city hall lawyer visited the Phoenix Square camp this week, where they found a lone protester sleeping near a portable heater, generating some warmth.

Woodside has made frequent visits to the Occupy Fredericton site. Shortly before the city's Christmas tree lighting ceremony, Woodside asked the group to scale down the size of the encampment.

The group complied, but it also built a frame out of two-by-fours to support its tarpaulins and, most recently, it put up a door to enter the structure.

"I knocked on the door and I heard somebody say 'Just a minute' and I waited and waited and waited. I actually pulled the door open a little bit and there was a rope holding it and a guy let me in," Woodside said.

"There's a big sign up that says there has to be two people here whenever the heater is being used and one has to be up, be awake. Well, the heater was on and there was only one person in the tent sleeping."

Woodside he wants the camp disassembled by the end of December for safety reasons.

"I've been more than reasonable. We've talked a number of times," Woodside said.

"I can't say that I don't agree with the foundation of their argument with the distribution of wealth amongst people. I don't disagree with that. However, it was just the other night when the weather started turning really cold and I'm thinking I'm the only one that they've been dealing with and if anything happens, I have that on my conscience and I just can't let that happen.

"I think this has gone on long enough and I'm prepared to go in and take down the structure next year."

Woodside said the group has had its time and made its point.

Occupy Fredericton responded to the mayor's demands by calling an emergency general assembly for 9 p.m. on Tuesday.

"The people united can never be defeated," wrote Occupy Fredericton supporter Arthur Taylor on his Facebook page as the call out to protesters was made Tuesday afternoon.

The Occupy movement began in September with Occupy Wall Street as a protest against corporate greed in the United States. It spread to other cities across the globe.

Protesters picked up on a variety of themes from social justice and the environment, to the anti-hydrofracking message from concerned citizens in Fredericton.

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