



Mayor's Office, City of Penticton

171 Main Street, Penticton, B.C. V2A 5A9

Tel: 250-490-2400 Fax: 250-490-2402

www.penticton.ca

March 11, 2021

Honourable David Eby

Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Housing

Office of the Attorney General, Government of British Columbia

PO Box 9282 Stn Prov Govt

Victoria, BC V8W 9J7

Via email to AG.Minister@gov.bc.ca

RE: Letter dated March 2, 2021 (File No. 614518)

Dear Minister Eby:

Thank you for meeting with Penticton City Council on January 26, 2021 and February 3, 2021 about Council's and the community's concerns regarding the supportive housing project at 3240 Skaha Lake Road. I am also confirming that City Council received confirmation on Tuesday, March 2, 2021 at 1:47 p.m. via email of your commitment to our requested third-party, independent evaluation of supportive housing. Penticton City Council would like to re-iterate several items:

- As identified in Council's January 13, 2021 letter to you, Council is requesting a robust and community-wide information and engagement program for the proposed supportive housing project at 3240 Skaha Lake Road. These sessions should be open to all members of the Penticton community, and advertised broadly, as such. All of the results of these engagement sessions should be provided to Council. We recognize that your office did provide some information in February to Council about BC Housing's possible approach but we want to ensure this is re-iterated in writing.
- There is still a lack of clarity around the location selection criteria used to identify this site as appropriate for supportive housing. This is the major thoroughfare in our community, and Council has heard significant concerns about Compass Court/House which is also located on the same road.
- Crime mapping and first response calls show an abundance of calls at Penticton's shelter and supportive housing facilities. These services are putting a strain on municipal services and finances. Council is concerned that a fourth supportive housing location could exacerbate the strain on these services. While emergency services are available to any member of the public, there has been limited effort from BC Housing, the operators, or Province to understand why there is a high call volume and strategies to decrease the need for frequent emergency services visits to these locations.

- As supportive housing is classified as Class 3 by BC Assessment, the supportive housing properties do not pay municipal property taxes. It is requested that the Province provide the municipality with a mechanism in funding fire, police, bylaw, and social development services for these facilities. This is even more important as BC Housing publicly advertises that it relies on municipal services, such as the police, to operate supportive housing programs.
- Council has hesitations that a new supportive housing program at 3240 Skaha Lake Road will result in any positive impacts for first responders, neighbours, and the business community. Council's concern is that BC Housing the and Province are adding a new supportive housing program in Penticton without any third party evaluation having taken place prior to replicating this model. For example, it appears that this project is a similar model to existing supportive housing services (housing supports without any integrated health services to support individuals' mental illnesses, substance uses, physical, and other health challenges). Additionally, Council would like to reiterate that it expects the evaluation to be completed prior to any work taking place on an additional supportive housing development at 3240 Skaha Lake Road.
- As Council does have an interest in seeing these lands appropriately developed, Council's preference for 3240 Skaha Lake Road is to transition the project from supportive housing to at least one senior's housing facility and one facility for lower-income, working individuals/families. Seniors were identified as being the largest group on BC Housing's Registry List data for Penticton that your office provided to Council. Additionally, these are the two most significant needs the City is hearing from our community so we believe that provincial investments should align with community priorities.

In regards to the materials provided by your office on March 2, 2021 around the scope of work of a third-party, independent evaluation, Council provides its comments in Attachment A.

We look forward to continuing to try to work with the Province and your Ministry in a positive way on priorities that will ensure Penticton is a safe and vibrant community. Please do not hesitate to contact my office in writing, should you or your staff have any questions.

Yours truly,



John Vassilaki
Mayor

cc:

Penticton City Council
Donny van Dyk, CAO – Penticton
John Horgan, Premier

Adrian Dix, Minister of Health
Sheila Malcomson, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Josie Osborne, Minister of Municipal Affairs

Attachment A

1. Council recognizes that some form of an evaluation is typically completed within one year of a supportive housing site opening. As Burdock House and Compass House both opened in 2019, Council is requesting an expeditious timeline on your proposed evaluation.
2. In regards to the last sentence in the second paragraph about the services the external firm would provide, Council is requesting that the third-party, independent firm also provide data interpretation, recommendation services, and write the report/document. Council would like to re-state that it fully expects that the full and complete report will be made public without redactions, except in cases where it is necessary to protect the identity of an individual experiencing homelessness.
3. Regarding the first sentence of the scope of work that defines supportive housing, we recommend that a more holistic definition be used. The proposed definition from your office is limited, and not in alignment with any of the previous materials provided by the Province or BC Housing.
 - For example, on May 9, 2019, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing stated in writing that Compass House would “offer them [individuals experiencing homelessness] the treatment and supports they need.”
 - For example, on October 3, 2019, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing stated in writing “new permanent homes with wraparound supports” and the same document stated that “[Burdock House would be a] tremendous success through support, clinical services and old-fashioned care.”
 - Therefore we suggest a definition that aligns more closely with the Province’s previous commitments to Council, such as the one used by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness: “Supportive Housing combines rental or housing assistance with individualized, flexible and voluntary support services for people with high needs related to physical or mental health, developmental disabilities or substance use.”
4. To clarify, the second sentence of the first paragraph of the proposed scope of work. Is this an evaluation on the impact of the residents in the supportive housing program, or the residents in the neighbourhood? Council’s interest is also in learning about the impact of the programs in the neighbourhood in which they reside. Instead of the survey with Community Advisory Committee members, Council is recommending that a survey be completed with neighbours living within a 400 metre radius of a supportive housing site.
5. While BC Housing released data on Monday, March 8, 2021 to *Global News* about supportive housing in Penticton, the data was exceptionally limited and only covered an 18 month time parameter. It is Council’s request that the evaluation cover the full time period since each of each of the three supportive housing programs opened.
6. Regarding administrative data, the City will commit to providing data from City services (e.g., bylaw, fire, social development), within the City’s privacy policies (e.g., aggregate). As a service provider, Council will also request that the RCMP cooperate with the evaluation, as well, but do note that the RCMP must adhere to its own federal legislation and policies.