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May 11, 2021

**Honourable John Horgan, Premier**

Office of the Premier  
PO Box 9041 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

***Via email to [premier@gov.bc.ca](mailto:premier@gov.bc.ca)***

Dear Premier Horgan,

I am writing on behalf of the citizens of Penticton urging you to resolve the impasse between City residents and the Attorney General and Minister of Housing, David Eby. Penticton voters have expressed overwhelming support in two surveys for you to step in and work with City Council to correct the Minister's handling of a temporary winter shelter located in the downtown core.

Penticton residents care about housing for those in need. The proof is evident from our past experience working with Provincial Ministers and BC Housing. Our city of 33,000 helps provide 1,906 provincially-funded units of non-market housing. This housing is the result of positive partnerships that reflect the very spirit of your own commitment to work with local municipalities.

However, under Minister Eby's leadership, your government has changed course on cooperating with local communities. The Minister has misinformed British Columbians by inferring that Penticton is not doing its part in supportive housing. This is despite his own Ministry's data indicating that Penticton has the highest number of supportive beds per capita in the B.C. interior.

Your government has been silent on the negative impact the shelter has had on vulnerable senior citizens, particularly on two seniors' residences directly across the street. A crime density map shows that the shelter at 352 Winnipeg Street has become the epicentre for property crime in Penticton. This is a costly drain on police, fire and bylaw resources as well as being harmful to surrounding residents and businesses.

Your government has not been silent, however, on provoking and polarizing legitimate concerns. Minister Eby threatened to bring 1,000 tents and sleeping bags into the City when the shelter's permit for lawful use in winter expired. It is odd that the Province's top lawyer is silent on protecting vulnerable senior citizens from crime but vocal on encouraging Provincial action which directly inflicts such crime on those same senior citizens.

While there's never a problem-free shelter location, integrating a shelter into surrounding neighbourhoods can be successful when Provincial leadership listens to the public and local concerns. Solving problems for one group should never bring harm or risk of safety to another. The goal should be to work together to find a better shelter location.

Penticton's united City Council, along with thousands of residents who share our concerns, do not believe that your government is listening. We hope you will. We request your intervention to ensure the Province returns to working in partnership with Penticton and other municipalities to solve the housing issues. What may work in Victoria for temporary housing does not necessarily work for the rest of B.C.

As a start, please reconsider Minister Eby's threat to invoke Provincial paramountcy to maintain an unlawful use of the shelter and instead direct BC Housing to apply solutions already suggested by City staff to find a better location, as Penticton Council requested in October 2020.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Vassilaki". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

John Vassilaki  
Mayor

cc. Honorable Dan Ashton, Member of the Legislative Assembly, Penticton  
Penticton City Council