

## **Council seeking feedback to formalize public opinion on shelter decision**

(Penticton, BC – March, 31 2021) – Between March 31 and April 10, 2021, the City of Penticton will survey its residents for the purpose of formalizing public opinion around Council’s March 2, 2021 decision not to renew a temporary use permit for the operation of a winter shelter at Victory Church (352 Winnipeg Street). Council declined the permit on several grounds, including that the shelter was originally intended as a temporary, winter solution only and, in the following months after the shelter opened in November 2020, had become a nuisance property negatively impacting nearby residents and businesses, lacked wrap-around support services and was demanding a high volume of Bylaw, Fire Dept and RCMP response resources.

Following the March 2 decision, combined with a subsequent decision made March 16 where the March 2 decision was upheld following a request from BC Housing to reconsider, Penticton City Council, by way of comments in a majority of received emails and petitions, has heard mostly support for their position on the shelter.

Given this support, combined with the Province’s stated intention to overrule the decision of an elected City Council, the City of Penticton is prepared to exercise its right to challenge the Province in court. This course of action is, however, not without significant challenges and, based on legal advice, would require the City spend from \$200,000 to \$300,000.

With the goal of obtaining broad-based Penticton resident feedback indicating whether or not the City should challenge the Province, Council is seeking the community’s opinion by way of a short formal survey, available either online or by phone.

“By their nature, difficult decisions trigger considerable feedback. The matter of the Victory Church shelter is no exception and to date Penticton Council has received mostly consistent support for its March 2 decision,” said Penticton Mayor, John Vassilaki. “However, for Council to act in the best interest of the whole community, and in keeping with past community issues involving strong interest or expense, conducting a formalized feedback process is the right thing to do to ensure we hear all perspectives. Whether you live near the shelter, away from the shelter or in the shelter, please share your feedback.”

Until the survey is completed and the results presented back to Council, the City will take no immediate action on the matter of the shelter. However, the public is advised that the shelter operator, Penticton & District Society for Community Living, has been sent a letter notifying them that, as of April 2, 2021, their Temporary Use Permit expires and they should be working with the City to relocate residents to alternative accommodations. In addition, the City has also sent a letter to the

building owner Pentictonia Holdings Ltd, advising them that their property at 352 Winnipeg Street has triggered 12 service calls to the Bylaw Department since the beginning of 2021 and that the City wishes to work with them on solutions to making this property less susceptible to the types of calls being received and help reduce instances of nuisance complaints from the surrounding neighbours.

“Amongst all the attention this issue has generated, it’s critical to note that, by way of the Province’s provided data, when it comes to creating solutions for the homeless and working with our partners to address housing, no City has provided more supportive housing per capita than Penticton and the Province is now using paramourty at the first disagreement. Any claims to the contrary are uninformed and counterproductive to keeping the conversation focused on the issues before us – creating long-term, properly placed solutions, equipped with supportive wrap-around services, and finding ways to prevent individuals from experiencing homelessness in the first place”, said Vassilaki.

Penticton residents are encouraged to complete the survey March 31, through April 10, 2021.

Residents with Internet access can go to:

- [www.shapeyourcitypenticton.ca/shelter-survey](http://www.shapeyourcitypenticton.ca/shelter-survey)

Individuals without Internet access can dial:

- 1-800-296-2237

PLEASE NOTE: callers will be asked to leave their contact information and an operator will call them back to complete the survey during daytime hours. This service will be available daily through to the close of the survey on April 10, 2021.

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**Contact:**

Philip Cooper  
Communication Manager  
City of Penticton  
250-490-2583