

UBCM warns Minister Eby of “Dangerous Precedent”

(Penticton, BC – May 20, 2021) – In response to Penticton City Council’s April 13, 2021 request, Union of BC Municipalities President, Brian Frenkel, has written a letter to the Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Housing, David Eby, urging the Province to commit to working in collaboration with local governments within the boundaries of their respective jurisdictions.

Sent May 19, 2021, Mr. Frenkel’s letter acknowledges concerns expressed by Mayor John Vassilaki regarding Minister Eby’s use of Provincial Paramountcy to overrule Council.

“We are concerned that the application of statutory immunity sets a dangerous precedent and undermines local government autonomy as established in legislation. The *Community Charter* confirms that municipalities and their Councils are an order of government within their jurisdiction that is “democratically elected, autonomous, responsible and accountable” and must operate under strict statutory conditions associated with public consultation and public interest. Furthermore, the *Local Government Act* grants local governments the powers and flexibility required to respond to the needs of their communities within that mandate.” stated Mr. Frenkel.

The letter concludes by inviting Minister Eby to join UBCM in exploring a dispute resolution mechanism that could be used as an alternative to the application of statutory immunity.

“I appreciate Mr. Frenkel sending his message of collaboration to Minister Eby,” said Penticton Mayor, John Vassilaki. “Council is elected locally, they are accountable locally and the sites for housing shelters like 352 Winnipeg Street should be decided locally. As the province has overridden local housing decisions elsewhere in BC, Penticton City Council is standing up to defend local autonomy and the ability for our residents and businesses to have a say in what’s best for their community.”

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