

April 17, 2024

Honourable Ravi Kahlon
Minister of Housing and Government House Leader
PO Box 9074, Stn. Prov Govt.
Victoria, BC V8W9E2

Sent via email: HOUS.minister@gov.bc.ca

Re: Funding for Temporary Shelters

Dear Honourable Minister Kahlon,

I am writing on behalf of City of Castlegar Council to express our extreme disappointment and concern regarding your Ministry's decision to discontinue funding for temporary winter shelters as of April 30, 2024 and advocate for you to reconsider your decision and continue funding to allow Castlegar's shelter and support services to remain operational until a permanent shelter and outreach services are in place.

This decision came as a surprise and is contrary to previous indications from provincial staff that our local shelter and outreach services would continue to receive funding through next winter. We understand that the Province's decision to end funding to temporary winter shelters was unilaterally made and that our shelter is caught up in that decision.

In 2023, the City worked closely with Castlegar & District Community Services Society (CDCSS), the community, local contractors, Interior Health and BC Housing to secure funding for the temporary shelter and outreach services in Castlegar. Recently, Castlegar was identified as a community that needs a permanent shelter. In response, the City has been actively working with BC Housing to identify a location in Castlegar for a permanent shelter and outreach services. By identifying Castlegar as a location for a permanent shelter, we believe this shows an identified need for the services and we are hopeful that you will continue to provide the required services in the interim.

Our local shelter, Out of the Cold, has been a vital resource since opening on December 22, 2023, in our community, providing a safe place for individuals experiencing homelessness. The shelter has seen over 40 unique individuals use the shelter, provided 735 nights of shelter, and almost always is at full capacity. It also offers essential services such as meals, emotional support, resources for hygiene, basic health care, access to provincial supports and meaningful daily activity. CDCSS has provided excellent service and built community support through a community neighbourhood liaison committee.


The shelter plays a crucial role in addressing homelessness in Castlegar. Since it opened in December, the City has seen a significant reduction in fire, ambulance, and RCMP calls associated with our most vulnerable residents.

Losing our shelter, and especially our outreach services, would have devastating consequences for those who rely on its services, public safety, and our community at large. Without access to the shelter, many vulnerable members of our community would be left without a roof over their heads, facing the harsher realities of being street-involved. This will lead to increased illness, hunger, and despair among people who are our community members. It would also result in the loss of well-trained staff, positive momentum, community support, and the community neighbourhood liaison committee, and could endanger the community's efforts to establish a permanent shelter.

Given the progress that Castlegar has made and is in the transition process from a temporary emergency shelter to a permanent shelter and outreach services solution, we respectfully ask that you reconsider your decision at a local level and continue funding to allow Castlegar's shelter and support services to remain operational until a permanent shelter and outreach services are in place.

I would appreciate an opportunity to discuss this further with you or your staff. I can be reached at mayor@castlegar.ca or 250.608.4709.

Sincerely,



Maria McFaddin

Mayor
City of Castlegar

cc: Katrine Conroy, MLA, Kootenay West
 Nanette Drobot, Regional Director BC Housing
 Reidun Rosi, Executive Director, Castlegar and District Community Services Society
 Castlegar Fire Department
 Castlegar RCMP
 Castlegar Integrated Services Collaborative
 Janice Morrison, Mayor, City of Nelson
 Colleen Jones, Mayor, City of Trail

