
Subject: Safe Streets Bylaw - Report

From: Amelia Merrick <[Redacted](#)>
Sent: Friday, March 20, 2026 7:46 AM
To: cityclerk <cityclerk@princegeorge.ca>; Mayor and Council <mayorandcouncil@princegeorge.ca>
Subject: Safe Streets Bylaw - Report

TO BE INCLUDED ON COUNCIL AGENDA

Dear Mayor and Council,

I was encouraged to see Mayor Yu, Brian Skakun, Susan Scott and Trudy Klassen on Thursday, March 12 when Dr. Joseph Hermer presented "[The Complaints is the Crime](#): An analysis of the Prince George Safe Streets Bylaw, January 1, 2022 to September 1, 2025." Furthermore, attendance by Walter Babicz, Eric Depanau, Kent Macneill and Claire Thwaites demonstrated the importance of this discussion.

The event drew an audience of 87 people representing 35 different organizations and 5 media stations. There were non-profit Executive Directors, board members, frontline staff and people who use public spaces for survival. Northern Health outreach and a few businesses also attended. The entire event was [livestreamed](#) and as of today the video was viewed over 1200 times. This tells me that our community care deeply about the most vulnerable in our city.

I can honestly say that I was thrilled to read the [public statement](#) made by the City. We are moving in the right direction! I believe that as we work together as a community we will improve safety and belonging. I appreciate the desire to balance a responsive complaints system with the rights and dignity of vulnerable citizens and I am eager to be part of the solution.

After a careful read of the report and listening to the panelists, I would like to ask you to consider these requests:

1. Immediately deposit the Safe Streets Bylaw with Health Authority and stop all actions related to “Open Drug Use” until this has been approved.
2. Remove open fire / squatter fire from the Safe Streets bylaw and use the Open Fire Clean Air bylaw instead. Triage fire calls to the Fire Department.
3. Improve the workflow process so that complaints are aligned to the Bylaw infraction (i.e. panhandle, obstruction, etc.).
4. Remove Squatter from the workflow.
5. Restrain from intervening when there is not a specific infraction. Instead educate the caller about the limits of bylaw and the purpose of public space.

I would also ask that you **publish a formal response** to Dr. Hermer’s report. This helps us improve our transparency and trust. Specifically, could you comment on:

- Whether the bylaw was deposited to the Health Authority
- Explain the legal basis you use to authorize the movement of people
- Comment on the use of the term squatter and clarify why you think that classification is about behaviour and not character
- Explain the trends in Figure 2, page 6. Why were there no squatter or obstruction complaints and why was there an increase in open drug use complaints for the period July 2023 – July 2024?

As the panelists so clearly described - **the Safe Streets Bylaw reveals gaps in our social systems**. Almost every complaint is an indication that someone is cold, lonely, hungry or afraid. Neither enforcement nor education will change that. Many of these issues are remediated at the Provincial level, however there are a few things that are within our jurisdiction. Here are two ideas:

1. Could you publicly share data from Safe Street bylaw complaints and interventions to:

- Mobilize Social Service agencies so that they target their programming to places and spaces of concern?
- Develop educational strategies for callers.
- Mobilize advocacy directed to the Province. For example we have a desperate need for a 365 * 24 hour space where people can be warm, dry and socialize. This would significantly reduce the number of complaints.

2. Mobilize downtown social service agencies to work together so that there are fewer people dependent on public space for their survival and social needs. I believe AWAC shared the same message at the March 9 council meeting.

The City has jurisdiction to amend or repeal the Safe Streets Bylaw and it is my hope that you will do that promptly. I recognize that the City has minimal jurisdiction over the changes that are required at the structural level. Brian Skakun observed that there was a visible absence from RCMP, Northern Health leadership, BC Housing, the Provincial and the Federal Government at the March 12 event. Our team sent invitations to several of those bodies. Given their absence, I wonder how the City could mobilize businesses, social service agencies and citizens to advocate to the Provincial and Federal Government for the resources we need? We have worked divisively for long enough – it's time we work together.

As I have shared before, I am happy to help.

Amelia

I am a lucky visitor to the ancestral unceded lands of the Lheidli T'enneh where the soap berries, huckleberries and blueberries grow in abundance.

Amelia Merrick, PhD

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