



1406 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Prince George, BC V2L 3B6

July 20, 2020

**Mayor and Council**  
**City of Prince George**  
**1100 Patricia Boulevard**  
**Prince George BC V2L 3V9**

**Dear Mayor & Council:**

On behalf of Downtown Prince George, we would like to acknowledge the real evidence of the many exciting things occurring in our downtown. The numerous projects that are part of the *'Changing Face of Downtown'* are already changing the look and feel of our downtown. This development continues to be encouraging to our association and to our members. As some of the projects are reaching completion such as the Park House Condo Project and the Hyatt Place hotel, it is promising to see other projects at various stages of construction and renovation. We continue to appreciate all the advanced engagement in understanding the impacts of construction and transportation changes to our downtown businesses and visitors. Just recently, it was a privilege to have our staff included in the first project management meeting for the new pool project. Prince George residents are really going to enjoy all the amenities of this new facility.

Unfortunately, the global pandemic changed the economic conditions for many downtown businesses and put a spotlight on community safety and inclusion in our city. A situation that was already difficult and complex has now been exacerbated with increasing concerns for the health of our businesses and the health of those struggling with poverty, homelessness, and addictions. Perhaps more than ever, the sense of safety and the need for social inclusion are even more critical to the economic success of our neighbourhoods and our downtown.

Safety is more than just an absence of crime; it is also creating a sense that spaces are places that are well managed and maintained. The sense of safety is impacted by factors such as cleanliness; the number of vacant and empty buildings; overflowing trash and graffiti. In some cases, unpredictable behavior that becomes escalated or agitated can be very threatening. If people do not feel safe, they do not feel welcome. We are proud that we worked with the City and other partners, in April, to implement some very effective initiatives to ensure our downtown remains safe and clean for everyone. We have increased the hours and added staff to the Downtown Clean Team to ensure our downtown sidewalks and streets are free from trash and litter. This social enterprise, that is made possible by joining forces with the Prince George Brain Injured Group, is doing their best to operate safely and effectively. Our City Bylaw Team and the RCMP are working together with security teams to keep our whole community safe during these different times. The reinstatement of the City's Graffiti Removal Program, planting downtown flower beds and weed removal in public spaces; provide the beautification attention that our downtown needs to ensure that welcome feeling. Downtown Prince George has added mobile security patrols during the late evenings to provide more eyes and ears on the streets of our downtown. We were able to install 60% of the normal hanging flower baskets in 2020 and continue to support our businesses with small grants in the areas of safety, beautification, e-commerce, covid-19 re-engineering costs and façade improvements.



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There are some very positive initiatives and good work going on in our community. However, we must repeat that this global pandemic and the resulting limitations for social inclusion has really magnified the issues of safety. The pandemic has shown the sharp economic and social inequalities in our city and our downtown. Homelessness and street involvement – along with substance use, mental illness, and related behaviors – have been far more evident on the street. Since the beginning of July an unfortunate murder and a suspicious fire has not provided the sense of confidence that our business owners and consumers need to feel welcome in our downtown. Business owners are not outreach workers and they are not police officers. But we agree that community safety is a collective responsibility to build safer, more inclusive neighbourhoods for all who live, work, play and study in our cities. We are very intent in doing our part to improve and promote downtown.

With this letter we would also like to support the exploration of the *Prince George RCMP Car 60 Program Expansion*, as submitted by Councillor Kyle Sampson for consideration at the July 27, 2020 regular Council meeting. This program has been effective in its limited capacity, to date. It is our belief that increased resources and service provision for this program would provide much needed support and contribute to a safer environment in our community.

We would like to thank Mayor and Council once again for understanding the importance of downtown to the economic growth of our community. Community safety and inclusion are the foundation of economic development and are really the prerequisite for a healthy community and downtown. It is for this reason we would also ask that Council quickly find a way to re-engage the **Select Committee on a Safe, Clean and Inclusive Community**. It is unfortunate that the timing of our new COVID-19 world has impacted the ability to engage in the collaborative work that began with the formation of the Select Committee. At our presentation on June 29<sup>th</sup>, the work of this committee was brought up and we indicated that we are anxious to join with our community partners and advocates to get back at the table. We look forward to Mayor and Council sharing what the 'next steps' of this committee will be and when they will be.

We thank you for your continued support of our downtown and for working in collaboration with the Downtown Prince George Business Improvement Association in '*shaping our dynamic downtown*'.

Sincerely,

**Eoin Foley, President**

**Downtown Prince George**

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cc.

Downtown Prince George Board of Directors

Colleen Van Mook, Executive Director, Downtown Prince George