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**Subject:**

330 Citizens call PG Mayor and Council to STOP THE CHAOS

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**From:** Amelia Merrick <Redacted>

**Sent:** Monday, June 28,

**To:** cityclerk <[cityclerk@princegeorge.ca](mailto:cityclerk@princegeorge.ca)>; mayorandcouncil <[mayorandcouncil@princegeorge.ca](mailto:mayorandcouncil@princegeorge.ca)>; Mayor <[MAYOR@princegeorge.ca](mailto:MAYOR@princegeorge.ca)>; Councillor Everitt, Frank <[Frank.Everitt@princegeorge.ca](mailto:Frank.Everitt@princegeorge.ca)>; Councillor Frizzell, Garth <[Garth.Frizzell@princegeorge.ca](mailto:Garth.Frizzell@princegeorge.ca)>; [garthfrizzell@gmail.com](mailto:garthfrizzell@gmail.com); Councillor Krause, Murry <[Murry.Krause@princegeorge.ca](mailto:Murry.Krause@princegeorge.ca)>; Councillor McConnachie, Terri <[Terri.McConnachie@princegeorge.ca](mailto:Terri.McConnachie@princegeorge.ca)>; Councillor Ramsay, Cori <[Cori.Ramsay@princegeorge.ca](mailto:Cori.Ramsay@princegeorge.ca)>; Councillor Sampson, Kyle <[Kyle.Sampson@princegeorge.ca](mailto:Kyle.Sampson@princegeorge.ca)>; Councillor Scott, Susan <[Susan.Scott@princegeorge.ca](mailto:Susan.Scott@princegeorge.ca)>; Councillor Skakun, Brian <[Brian.Skakun@princegeorge.ca](mailto:Brian.Skakun@princegeorge.ca)>; Councillor Skakun, Brian <[bskakun@telus.net](mailto:bskakun@telus.net)>

**Cc:** Amanda Follett Hosgood <[afolletthosgood@thetyee.ca](mailto:afolletthosgood@thetyee.ca)>; Bylaw Services <[bylawservices@princegeorge.ca](mailto:bylawservices@princegeorge.ca)>; [shirley.bond@bcliberals.com](mailto:shirley.bond@bcliberals.com); [mike.morris@bcliberals.com](mailto:mike.morris@bcliberals.com); [Bob.Zimmer.C1@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Bob.Zimmer.C1@parl.gc.ca); [Todd.Doherty.C1@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Todd.Doherty.C1@parl.gc.ca); [letters@pgcitizen.ca](mailto:letters@pgcitizen.ca); The Citizen <[newsTheCitizen@city.pg.bc.ca](mailto:newsTheCitizen@city.pg.bc.ca)>; [cbcnewsvancouver@cbc.ca](mailto:cbcnewsvancouver@cbc.ca); [editor@thetyee.ca](mailto:editor@thetyee.ca); [premier@gov.bc.ca](mailto:premier@gov.bc.ca)

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This email is PUBLIC, to be included in the COUNCIL package

Signed – 330 Citizens

Dear Mayor and Council,

As you prepare for the council meeting where you will decide on the Safe Street Bylaw, we would like to remind you that the decision you make today will profoundly impact the lives of those who are unhoused and precariously housed. It also sets the precedent for the kind of culture we chose for PG – either punitive or solutions-focused. This culture will impact all of us – young and old, employed, unemployed rich and poor. We hope that you will be guided by wisdom and that you will chose to reject the Safe Street bylaws.

330 people have signed the Together We Stand Call to Action to Stop the Chaos, petition below. Through this petition we are signaling to our elected officials that we want to be part of human-centred long-term solutions rather than short-term punitive approaches. <https://www.change.org/p/city-of-prince-george-stop-the-chaos?fbclid=IwAR0Uj6X5ZsBvkO7BqNbkD5ovyMqqRXIFmsV8zqjkl-Uu5kK39Xr4SZaV0oo>

**TOGETHER WE STAND CALL TO ACTION:  
#STOP THE CHAOS - JUNE 14, 2021**

TOGETHER WE STAND, a citizens group with 986 members calls for immediate ACTION at municipal, provincial and federal levels to escalate support for homeless and precariously housed community members in Prince George.

**We have 5 demands:**

- **STOP THE CHAOS!** Proposed amendments to bylaws No. 7370, 2002 and No. 9211, 2021 increase chaos to homeless and precariously housed persons and the social service agencies who support them. These amendments are harmful to people, unhelpful for Indigenous organizations, non-profits and social service agencies, damaging to businesses and expensive. We recommend that mayor and council *immediately reject these bylaw amendments* as they will further escalate chaos in our city.
- **Implement an emergency shelter plan that responds to people's realities, is based on respect, human dignity and reflects the Canadian Chart of Rights and Freedoms.** Homeless individuals are exhausted from being misplaced on a daily basis and inappropriate shelter puts people at higher risk of overdose death. Prince George does not have an adequate supply of appropriate shelter which considers the unique needs of individuals, including the need for longer-term stay including day times use, the need to store belongings, and the need to be accommodated with partners or pets. Appropriate shelter also recognizes that sobriety should not be a condition for shelter. We demand that the City and *Province expedite low-barrier shelter options and in the meantime, provide a secure designated space for people to sleep outdoors, store their belongings, defecate, urinate and wash.*
- **Create a reasonable long-term housing-first plan that ensures all homeless people have appropriate housing options before January 2, 2022 when the L'heidli Tenneh flag is raised again.** The cost for institutional service (police, bylaw, ambulance, health, mental health) far outways a housing first solution.
- **Increase social services and programs to support homeless and precariously housed community members.** As a result of COVID-19, 75% of non-profit organizations in the Fraser Fort George reduced, canceled or changed in-person program. We demand an increase in resources (financial, staffing, political commitment, etc.) to social services and programs, especially Indigenous agencies.
- **Ensure homeless and precariously housed community members are engaged in democratic processes, and are part of creating reasonable emergency and long-term housing solutions.**

**TOGETHER WE STAND** formally requests a hearing to mayor and council at the next Council Meeting.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

### FACT SHEET: #STOP THE CHAOS

- **The proposed bylaw amendments are unconstitutional and contravene international human rights laws.** In the 2015 BC Supreme Court case BC/Yukon Association of Drug War Survivors (DWS) v City of Abbotsford the B.C. Supreme Court ruled against municipal bylaws that displaced homeless people from public spaces. Section 7 of the Canadian Charter protects individual safety and security. Furthermore the “international human rights law does not permit governments to destroy peoples’ homes, even if those homes are made of improvised materials and established without legal authority. Governments may not remove residents from encampments without meaningfully engaging with them and identifying alternative places to live that are acceptable to them” (UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing, 2020)
- **The inadequate supply of appropriate shelter in Prince George increases risks of overdose** and Northern B.C. already has the highest per capital overdose death rate in the province.
- **Evicting homeless people in Prince George re-enacts colonial practices.** There are clear connections between residential schools and homelessness: 1) Shelter systems are reminiscent of Residential School (beds lined in a row, strict rules); 2) Residential schools destroyed family systems, eroded life skills capabilities and created intergenerational trauma. This prevents many people from securing stable housing; 3) There is a strong connection between the children of residential schools and substance dependency and there is a strong connection between substance dependency and homelessness; 4) There is a strong connection between foster care and homelessness: 40% of youth experiencing homelessness have been involved with children welfare services, 52% of children in foster care are Indigenous – many of whom are children or grandchildren of Residential School Survivors; 5) The Residential School system was an inadequate education which prevented graduates from competing in the labour market. Labour market exclusion contributes to poverty which is a top contributor to homelessness.
- **The data being used to support the proposed amendments overlooks the devastating impact of COVID-19 on non-profits, social services and marginalized community members.** PG Bylaw

reported double the number of “Calls for Services” (CFS) in 2020 but they fail to analyze the impact of COVID-19 on social services in PG. 75% of non-profits in the Fraser Fort George canceled, reduced or changed in-person programming. It should come as no surprise that we are seeing an increase in loitering, open drug use, tenting and increased CFS. There is literally no indoor space for people to go.

*“Because of COVID, we can only allow 18 people to come to our AA and Narcotics Anonymous meetings. I can facilitate up to 50 people but because of COVID rules, we can’t. We have zoom set up but there are a lot of people that are not comfortable with zoom. There are a lot of people that have dropped out of the programming because they can’t do in-person meetings.” Al Spencer, Alano Society*

*Signed, 330 CONCERNED CITIZENS*