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City of Campbell River
From the Office of the Mayor

August 26, 2024

The Honourable David Eby
Premier of the Province of British Columbia
Via email: Premier@gov.bc.ca

Dear Premier Eby,

Re: Urgent Request for Provincial Support in Addressing Homelessness in Campbell River

I am writing to you on behalf of the City of Campbell River to express our deep concern regarding the challenges our community is facing in providing adequate temporary shelter for individuals experiencing homelessness. Provincial case law establishes the obligation of local governments to provide an adequate location for overnight camping (temporary shelter) for unhoused persons. However, the sites currently available on City land are limited and do not fully meet the needs of the community or the individuals who require these services.

For a location for overnight temporary shelter to be adequate, it must be relatively close to services and supports typically accessed by individual experiencing mental health, substance use and other health conditions who are also homeless. The location of these services in Campbell River is primarily in the downtown core. The provincial decision to place these services in proximity of residential, commercial, cultural and recreational assets means the City has very limited options in terms of land availability outside of parking lots, and high value Parks and green spaces enjoyed by our residents and visitors.

Considering these challenges, we respectfully request that the Province of British Columbia take immediate action by making provincially regulated land available for temporary overnight camping in Campbell River. We understand the provincial position on use of sites such as off season use of the Quinsam campground given that the aim is to have such assets available for the recreating public and not set precedent for their use as alternative housing. However, the City would respond that these camp sites are not used during the off season and are typically closed; moreover, the City faces the very same challenge when it comes to use of our Parks and green spaces but is nonetheless forced to move forward with this under the circumstances. The availability of provincial land would greatly enhance our ability to provide safe and appropriate spaces for those in need. In that instance, the City would agree to provide all necessary services including fencing, portable washrooms, garbage bins and removal, contract security, bylaw enforcement and ongoing monitoring.

Furthermore, we ask that the province provide additional funding to expand our winter shelter program. By doing so, we can reduce the demand for temporary overnight shelter, especially during colder

months, and ensure that those without permanent housing have access to safe, warm, and secure environments. We would also like to explore funding availability to establish a Homeless Encampment Action Response Team (HEART) to better integrate the response of the City, RCMP and service providers to homelessness and complement our partnership on the HEARTH rapid housing initiative.

The City of Campbell River is committed to working collaboratively with the provincial government to address the pressing issue of homelessness in our community. We believe that with the province's support, we can make significant progress in providing the necessary resources and spaces to meet the needs of our most vulnerable residents.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kermit Dahl', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kermit Dahl
Mayor