

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

News Release

June 14, 2021

Homeless Evictions in Prince George Must Stop; Supportive Plan Urgently Needed

(Prince George, Lheidli Tenn'eh Territory) The First Nations Leadership Council is calling on the City of Prince George to collaborate with local First Nations organizations and other service providers to immediately develop a workable plan to address homelessness in the city. City Hall distributed notices of eviction to residents of a tent city occupying a vacant lot downtown today, demanding those occupying the site vacate by June 25th, but give no supports for relocation or alternative spaces to live.

Homelessness in Prince George, like in the rest of the country, has reached a crisis point. The City of Prince George has plans to build supportive housing; yet in the interim they have directed resources toward criminalizing the homeless population through a heavy-handed bylaw approach that issues endless citations and dismantles encampments each morning. The current encampment is close to services used by the homeless population. The City must provide alternative space for this encampment, and work with First Nations organizations and other service providers to support the encampment's residents. The Provincial and Federal Governments must also provide financial support to address this issue.

"The homelessness crisis in Canada is complex, multifaceted, and cannot be addressed with these kinds of blunt and short-sighted approaches," said Regional Chief Terry Teegee of the BC Assembly of First Nations. "City Hall's approach continually re-traumatizes these vulnerable people, many of whom are suffering from the intergenerational impacts of residential schools. The City of Prince George has a long-term plan to house people experiencing homelessness, but they need to work with First Nations and other service organizations in the meantime to ensure humane treatment of these vulnerable people."

"We demand the City's eviction notice be rescinded until such time as they have a way forward that treats those impacted with dignity and respect," said Grand Chief Stewart Phillip of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. "Our unhoused Indigenous relatives are disproportionately impacted and targeted by these ongoing actions to displace from our own lands. While governments respond with inaction, local First Nations organizations have developed a proposed plan to provide services to those living in the encampment. The City needs to provide the space, and the Province and Federal Government need to provide the resources for services. Anything less is can only be described as criminalizing poverty, and upholding the racist and colonial values this province continues to deny."



BRITISH COLUMBIA
ASSEMBLY OF
FIRST NATIONS

1004 Landooz Rd.
Prince George, BC
V2K 5S3

Ph: 778-945-9910
Fx: 778-945-9916



FIRST
NATIONS
SUMMIT

1200-100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC
V7T 1A2

Ph: 604-926-9903
Fx: 604-926-9923
Toll Free: 866-990-9939



UNION OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA
INDIAN CHIEFS

401 - 312 Main Street
Vancouver, BC
V6A 2T2

Ph: 604-684-0231
Fx: 604-684-5726

“This is a clear reflection of the low-income housing and shelter crisis in Prince George. Further marginalizing and stripping the dignity of those who have little choice but to seek shelter in tents, will only make this issue worse,” said Cheryl Casimer of the First Nations Summit Political Executive. “While tents may not be an ideal option, it is the only option many of these people have. The City of Prince George must work with the provincial government and other partners to find immediate solutions that will address the lack of affordable housing and shelter for disadvantaged citizens.”

For further comment please contact:

Annette Schroeter, Communications Officer, BCAFN 778-281-1655

Cheryl Casimer, FNS Political Executive 778-875-2157

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President, UBCIC 250-490-5314