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VIA EMAIL

Ref: 67049

May 8, 2024

His Worship Bob Wells  
Mayor of the City of Courtenay  
830 Cliffe Avenue  
Courtenay BC V9N 2J7  
Email: [bwells@courtenay.ca](mailto:bwells@courtenay.ca); [jokane@courtenay.ca](mailto:jokane@courtenay.ca)

Dear Mayor Wells:

Thank you for your letter of April 5, 2024, requesting Homeless Encampment Action Response Team (HEART) and Homeless Encampment Action Response Temporary Housing (HEARTH) programs in your community.

I understand the challenges communities across BC, including Courtenay, are facing in responding to the impacts of the housing crisis. We share a commitment to provide people facing homelessness and living in encampments with supports to come inside and access suitable housing options.

The Province is keen to partner with local governments, First Nations, and community and Indigenous organizations looking to implement new provincial programs designed to reduce homelessness and prevent future encampments. The HEART and HEARTH programs were launched in 2023 as part of the Belonging in BC Provincial Homelessness Plan, with the first phase focused on priority communities with complex encampment challenges, site prospects, and partnership opportunities. Programs have launched in Abbotsford, Prince George, Nanaimo, Victoria, and Kelowna. We look forward to launching in additional communities and Courtenay's interest is noted.

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I appreciate the City's commitment to identify land and opportunities for additional shelter and housing, as well as support for the newly purchased 925 Braidwood Avenue site where the Province—through BC Housing—will construct a 60-unit supportive housing building and a separate, permanent, purpose-built shelter with 40 beds. This will add to the existing three year-round/ temporary shelter sites, totalling 59 shelter spaces, in Courtenay.

I recognize that, in the interim, there remains an urgent need for shelter spaces for vulnerable people in your community, especially during months with extreme weather. BC Housing is currently working on the 2024/25 Extreme Weather Response program planning. Communities are encouraged to reach out directly with any questions and discuss their plans and potential shelter needs to Jennifer Fox, Regional Director of Vancouver Island, at: [jfox@bchousing.org](mailto:jfox@bchousing.org) or Sarah Smith, Regional Director of Development, at: [ssmith@bchousing.org](mailto:ssmith@bchousing.org).

I appreciate your commitment to the important work of supporting people sheltering in encampments to access a pathway to stable housing. Thank you again for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ravi Kahlon', written in a cursive style.

Ravi Kahlon  
Minister of Housing