



July 10, 2024

Ref: 68477

Dear Local Government Partner,

I am writing today to provide an update on the decision regarding amendments to the *Community Charter* and the *Vancouver Charter* introduced in the *Miscellaneous Statutes Amendments Act* (Bill 45). I also want to express my thanks for providing input and feedback on Bill 45 and Provincial policy regarding homelessness and encampments.

In November 2023, the Attorney General in partnership with the Ministry of Housing (HOUS) introduced amendments to the *Community Charter* and the *Vancouver Charter* in Bill 45. The amendments provide a description of “reasonably available alternative shelter,” in the context of court actions related to encampments, as:

- a place where people may stay overnight,
- have nearby access to washroom and shower,
- are offered a meal, nearby, each day,
- and are in a staffed place.

The purpose of the legislation was to establish criteria so that when local governments go to the courts to remove people from encampments, actions and considerations regarding shelter are informed by a common understanding of what meets a person’s basic needs.

In Fall 2024, the Province heard concerns from Indigenous partners and First Nations, Local Governments, advocacy groups, and other partners regarding the potential impacts of the shelter amendments. In recognition of these concerns, the amendments were not put into force while HOUS engaged in further consultation.

Throughout Winter 2023 and Spring 2024, we engaged with partners to better understand issues and concerns. Feedback was gathered from Indigenous partners and First Nations, Local Governments, community organizations, National and Provincial advocacy groups, law enforcement, and communities. We learned that the amendments did not provide enough clarity for a common understanding of “reasonably available alternative shelter” and the contexts under which the description should or could apply. Partners also shared appreciation for the Province’s efforts to help respond to and prevent encampments through policy, programs, and support for people and communities.

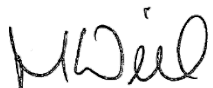
As such, and after careful consideration of the feedback received, **I am writing to inform you that Bill 45 amendments to the *Community Charter* and *Vancouver Charter* will not be brought into force at this time.**

We know that responding to encampments remains a pressing issue; during our engagements we heard clearly from partners that the Province must continue to work urgently and in collaboration to support people sheltering in encampments through access to resources, shelter and housing services, as well as to support partners managing and responding to encampments. We will continue to focus on ending the cycle of homelessness by providing pathways to homes for people, support for people sheltering outdoors, and support for communities through provision of a spectrum of resources, shelter, programs, and housing. These actions will continue to be guided by Belonging in BC (BiBC): plan to prevent and reduce homelessness (<https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/BelongingStrategy.pdf>) and Homes for People: Action Plan (https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/Homes_For_People.pdf).

In addition, the Province is developing a Provincial Encampment Response Resource in collaboration with BC Housing, First Nations, Indigenous and community organizations, Local Governments, and people with lived experience. This resource will provide an overview of provincial policy, wise practices and resources for communities responding to encampments, with a focus on coordination, partnership, and ensuring people-centered, culturally safe responses. This resource will be finalized and available publicly in Summer 2024.

Thank you for taking the time to share your perspectives on this initiative. I appreciate the opportunity to work in partnership to support people sheltering in encampments so everyone has a place to call home.

Yours truly,



Meghan Will
Assistant Deputy Minister
Homelessness, Partnerships & Housing Supports Division