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MEDIA RELEASE

Chamber and Downtown Kelowna Association concerned about one-year extension of what was to be a temporary emergency shelter in downtown

Kelowna: News of a one year extension to the lease for the emergency shelter that popped up last winter in downtown Kelowna doesn't come as a complete shock to the Chamber of Commerce as there were hints over the last few weeks that this was going to happen.

"We understand the need for such a facility to help those that are marginalized in our society but we feel a bit misled about this location," stated Tom Dyas, Past President of the Kelowna Chamber of Commerce. "First we were told that this was not an ideal site but not to worry as it was only going to be temporary and now it seems the plan is to operate year round."

The Chamber and Downtown Kelowna have been part of several meetings involving stakeholders from the downtown business community, the City, BC Housing, the RCMP, John Howard Society and other parties to review options to re-locate the temporary shelter. Unfortunately, given such a limited timeframe every option suggested by the business community has not met the parameters defined by BC Housing.

The Chamber and Downtown Kelowna have been active in trying to get both BC Housing and the City to address a number of the safety concerns that businesses and employees in the area of the shelter have expressed since it opened. With the news that the shelter is now going to operate year round the organizations will be stepping up efforts to get guarantees from the City and BC Housing that they will take appropriate action to ensure a safe environment for those using the facility and the many employees, customers and business operators that work in close proximity to the shelter.

"Our members fully understand the need for the City and BC Housing to provide an emergency shelter while other more suitable housing is in the works," said Dan Allen, President of Downtown Kelowna. "We support those efforts and the work of the service providers but we continue to believe that the current location of Cornerstone should not be viewed as a long-term solution."

The current temporary shelter has brought more street crime to the area including increased break-ins and property damage along with an increase in fear among those who work in the area. The Chamber and DKA will continue to encourage the City and BC Housing to increase security and expand regular clean-up efforts while aggressively looking at other locations.

For more information:

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