

March 5, 2019

STATEMENT FROM KELOWNA CHAMBER PRESIDENT CARMEN SPARG Following announcement of further extension to emergency shelter in downtown Kelowna

BC Housing has announced another extension to the Cornerstone Shelter lease on Leon Avenue, just one year after two previous extensions. Chamber President Carmen Sparg released the following statements on the matter.

“There’s no doubt that this news will concern a number of businesses in the area, but they can take some solace in the guarantee from BC Housing that the scope of operations will be reduced and eventually the temporary shelter will be closed by summer as more appropriate housing options become available.”

“The announcement is disappointing as two previous extensions have already occurred; however, the Chamber understands BC Housing and the City are working diligently to find alternate locations for the clients of the temporary emergency shelter and it will only be a few more months before the location on Leon is shut down.”

“It’s cold outside, and the chamber appreciates that finding alternative facilities has been difficult. We recognize how challenging it can be to find suitable sites. A short-term extension to the Cornerstone lease is preferable to the erection of a tent city in Kelowna.”

“Caring for the homeless is the right thing to do. The major issue businesses in the area are concerned about is the rise of petty crime, vandalism and nuisance behaviour since the temporary emergency shelter was established, particularly because of its size and proximity to another shelter just down the street. Action taken last year by the City to increase monitoring, enforcement, cleaning patrols and communication has made a positive impact although many businesses are still concerned for the safety of their staff and employees.”

“We’re also pleased at the RCMP’s KOaST (Kelowna Outreach and Support Table) initiative introduced this past week. More funding for collaborative interventions that help connect vulnerable people to the services and support they need will assist our community deal with these complex issues.”

For more information: Carmen Sparg carmensparg@live.com