



April 23, 2018

Proposed Shelter on Burnett Street

Recently the Chamber of Commerce serving Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows conducted a survey of our members regarding the new proposed location for the homeless shelter on Burnett Street.

Although the results were evenly split between those who support and those who are opposed to the Burnett Street site, one thing was abundantly clear: the lack of public input was of grave concern to all of us.

We at the Chamber understand that the shelter needs to go somewhere. We have supported the findings of a committee comprised of local citizens who diligently came up with solutions that would have resolved the problem and been palatable to the broader citizenry of Maple Ridge. The findings of this committee, the hard work that was undertaken, the responsible compromises that were reached, all of these were brushed aside by the Provincial Government in an apparent effort to dictate the outcome with as little local input as possible.

Now, in addition to the callous manner in which the first issue was resolved, we have the Royal Crescent location that has not been approved by our municipal council, has not been supported by any public consultation whatsoever, and again is being imposed on Maple Ridge by the provincial government. By doing this, the provincial government is ignoring its own insistence that businesses, in particular developers, work within a legal framework largely dictated by the municipal licensing authorities. Beyond that the provincial government is currently in a struggle with the federal government over a jurisdictional dispute regarding pipelines which bears a striking similarity to our own issue. We at the chamber would encourage the provincial government to lead by example.

We realize that the people that need these facilities require a place to live in order to start the healing process, but this facility will only put a roof over their head and will be unsupported by any type of treatment regimen. Additionally, the proximity to residential neighborhoods, schools and local business will put undue pressure on the local community from a number of points of view.

The Chamber is here to help business, to advocate on behalf of business, and see our communities grow in a healthy and productive atmosphere. We ask that our local MLA's listen to the community whose votes they have garnered and pay attention to the prior experience of those who tried to resolve the problem we are now facing. We all have to work together to fix this situation. Shelter is important, but more important is the follow up. Treatment requires a long term commitment, it is not enough to herd troubled souls into a warehouse and forget about them. If we are going to succeed in this struggle, resources will have to be brought to bear from a number of sources and the business community is a significant one.

Ken Holland  
President  
Chamber of Commerce serving Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows