



**June 24, 2009**

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Ministry of Housing and Social Development  
PO BOX 9058 STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9E1

**VIA FAX: (250) 356-7292**

**Attention: The Honourable Rich Coleman, Minister of Housing and Social Development**

Dear Sir,

**Re: HEAT shelters in Vancouver**

I write today to call on you as Minister of Housing and Social Development to commit funding to the five homeless shelters opened in Vancouver this past winter. Known as the HEAT shelters, these facilities have provided a safe place to sleep for at least 450 people each and every night. The province has funded them since April, but this funding is set to expire on June 30. If the shelters are closed, hundreds of people will be turned out onto the streets and parks of Vancouver. I urge you to prevent this devastating scenario, and commit the necessary funding to keep the shelters open until there is sufficient safe and affordable housing for everyone who needs it.

Last week, Pivot began a petition to keep the shelters open. **In less than one week, almost 2000 individuals have signed Pivot's online petition calling on your government to keep the shelters open.** Hundreds more have signed paper versions of the petition that are circulating throughout the community. I have enclosed the text of the petition and the names and comments of these concerned people. I urge you to read the comments of these individuals, as they demonstrate the compassion and support British Columbians have for the people who use the shelters.

In addition to public support for the shelters, there are also legal issues. Closing the HEAT shelters in light of clear evidence that this will leave homeless people with nowhere to go raises important questions regarding the application of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. In *Adams v. Victoria*, Judge

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Ross found that the “Life, Liberty and Security of the Person” interest set out in section 7 of the Charter included a right to shelter from the elements, and the right not to be deprived thereof. In our view, the decision to terminate funding for the shelters and cast people into the streets when there is clearly nowhere else for them to go constitutes a Charter violation and would be reviewable in a court of law.

Hundreds of citizens are calling on your government to commit to keeping these shelters open. Government statistics show that people experiencing homelessness outnumber available shelter beds by more than two-to-one, and that full shelters turned people away more than 43,000 times last year. British Columbians understand that these shelters fill a huge need in Vancouver. On behalf of the thousands of people who have signed Pivot’s petition, we strongly urge you to continue funding these shelters until such time as everyone has a safe and permanent place to call home.

Thank you,

PIVOT LEGAL SOCIETY

per:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Track', is written over a faint, circular watermark or stamp.

Laura Track  
*Housing Campaign Lawyer*