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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Saturday, August 31, 2024**

**Stop CPH response to Housing Minister Ravi Kahlon**

<https://mailchi.mp/sheldonstarrett/we-stopped-cph>

Richmond, BC:

Sheldon Starrett, Lead Organizer for Stop CPH, has released the following statement in response to the BC NDP government decision to temporarily suspend the permanent supportive housing proposal in Richmond:

“In response to the growing opposition from Richmond residents and business operators under our Stop CPH movement, the BC Government just announced they are suspending the Cambie Permanent Housing (CPH) project.

The people of Richmond have placed insurmountable pressure on the decision makers behind this project. Just over the last month, our Stop CPH group has successfully mobilized over five hundred residents to protest at our rally against the site, received over 130,000 views on our Stop CPH online video, collected over 7,500 petitioners in opposition, and collected five hundred signatures from local businesses in the city centre.

I would like to thank all volunteers with the Stop CPH team who have worked tirelessly over the past month, including Kevin Lai, Mahdi Torabi, Eric Poon, Dickens Cheung, and other leaders of neighbouring residences and businesses.

While we welcome the pause on this project for greater consultation, we recognize this suspension is likely only a tactic to avoid any scrutiny and criticism directed at the government until after the provincial election. Given the track record of BC Housing and the City of Richmond with the two presently operational Temporary Modular Housing (TMH) sites, there is a broken trust in government in being able to mitigate the harmful and negative impacts the low-barrier housing will have on the surrounding neighbourhood. There doesn't seem to be any plan to address this.

These housing policies are being driven by ideological zeal, not with transparency or accountability. The government needs to consult experts, such as Dr. Julian Somers - rather than destroying his years of research on these very issues just because they do not like the results.

The government needs to provide detox and treatment for drug users, and appropriate care for those with mental health conditions. Warehousing homeless people into large scale housing without adequate support is not supportive housing.

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We know the transition rate at the TMH sites is low, and we have seen residents leave the site in unmarked body bags.

This system is not helping the homeless. It is not helping those with mental health conditions. It is not helping those with drug addictions. It is not helping neighbourhoods where the lawlessness, drugs, and crime have impacted law-abiding residents and businesses. The model is broken, the promises to mitigate and prevent these impacts have been broken, and the trust is broken. Housing is part of the solution, but the situation is serious and the stakes are so high that this process should require a commitment to openness and transparency.

That means residents and businesses need to be part of the conversation, and not dismissed just because their opposition may be inconvenient to ideological political agendas. The people of Richmond do want to work with our government on finding a community consensus that does not lead to negative impacts and outcomes.

In response to the Minister's statement, City Councillor Kash Heed was quick to condemn the suspension and label legitimate criticism of the CPH as misinformation. This smearing and gaslighting has been rampant from our elected City Councillors, and unproductive to finding a better solution that will address the concerns of the community. The ideology of expanding the harm reduction industry at the expense of drug prevention, education, enforcement, and treatment is only exacerbating the drug crisis."

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Sheldon Starrett