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To Mayor Gordon Milsom and other concerned parties,

As a neighbour who will be right next door to the proposed shelter on Stevens Road, we are in full support of the city's proposal to have that shelter next to our property. We are grateful to the province and city for stepping in and bringing a very positive temporary solution. We believe that this defined, fenced, lit, and supervised space is well thought through and allows us to host these members of our community who are in difficult circumstances in a humane way.

Safety is always a factor no matter where you go in West Kelowna. In every corner of our city we have the potential of running into civility or violence. These are realities now around our church property and, in fact, in my own quiet neighbourhood. Let's not give way to fear by projecting and concluding that the presence of a shelter is going to lead to the Wild West.

Our church community has programs throughout the week including an Out of School Care Program and a weekly Youth Group. We have had all kinds of people wandering through our property and we have had and will continue to have safety measures in place. We address this in our policies and we will continue to do so.

In fact, in support of there being "good people even among the homeless," when we have had the presence of individuals who can't be on the property when kids and youth are present, individuals have always respectfully left.

Responding to people who are experiencing the complications of homelessness, addiction, and mental health is not simple – we are all seeing that. It would be great if we had a fix that was neat and tidy, but the poor and hurting are among us and it impacts us, and should impact us.

The crisis being experienced this winter in our city of West Kelowna, and across the bridge in Kelowna, should open up a new kind of conversation and push better ideas forward, but for now, this seems like a good and reasonable response. A good outcome to all of this in the days to come would be that our West Kelowna Community would think creatively, courageously and compassionately about this and maybe even set an example for other communities.

We have good neighbours in the Stevens road area, and I trust that others will give this a chance.

Sincerely

Pastor Michael Klassen  
On behalf of SunRidge Community Church Leadership