[Name of Municipal Official]

[Address]

[Date]

Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

We are residents of [municipality] and members of the Church of St Peter and St Simon-the-Apostle writing to you to express our concern about the situation facing people without shelter in our [city/town/county]. With the numbers of COVID-19 cases increasing in our province and winter weather fast approaching, it is more important than ever to take steps for the health and safety of unhoused people in our community, to avoid increased transmission of the virus and potential loss of life.

As we have learned throughout this pandemic, the risk of COVID-19 transmission is much higher in indoor settings where people are in close proximity to each other over a long period of time, especially when ventilation is poor. We therefore urge Council to explore every available option – whether vacant hotel rooms, vacant apartment units, modular units or the like - to find ways to rapidly rehouse homeless individuals in individual units, with the appropriate supports, so that they have not only a roof over their heads but also have a space they can call their own, safe from transmission of the virus, where they can enjoy privacy and dignity. We urge you to work with shelter staff and service providers, and unhoused people themselves, to work out appropriate supports for people who are rehoused in this way. We hope that this measure represents not merely a temporary solution but the first step toward permanent housing for those experiencing homelessness.

We realize that there may not be enough units immediately available to rehouse all homeless individuals in our community. For this reason, we also urge you to halt the clearing of encampments where people seek shelter outside rather than in congregate settings such as shelters. The Center for Disease Control recommends that is it is safer from a public health perspective to allow people to remain in encampments where individual housing options are not available. In addition, the 2018 coroner’s jury verdict in the inquest into the death of Grant Faulkner recommended that municipalities allow for the provision of survival equipment, supplies and safety information to people who sleep rough rather than accessing shelter services. Again, we urge you to work closely with service providers and people in encampments to take a flexible, harm-reduction approach, rather than forcing people to move into congregate settings.

Sunday, November 22, was National Housing Day in Canada, a day which has been observed since 1998 when the Federation of Canadian Municipalities endorsed the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee’s declaration of homelessness as a national disaster. Twenty-three years later, homelessness continues to be a crisis, compounded by the current pandemic. November 22 is also the Sunday of the church year when we celebrate God’s kingdom among us. As Anglican Christians, our faith reminds us that God’s kingdom is manifest when we treat those in need as if they were Christ himself. We commit to working with you and your Council to find ways to serve those in housing need in our community.

Sincerely yours,

NAMES