
Subject: Council Agenda Correspondence

From: Julian Legere <*REDACTED*>
Sent: Sunday, May 01, 2022 9:30 AM
To: cityclerk <cityclerk@princegeorge.ca>
Subject: Council Agenda Correspondence

Submitted to the city clerk by Julian Legere (307-1501 Queensway, *REDACTED*) for inclusion on the next Council meeting agenda.

Dear Mayor and Council,

We are writing to advocate for inclusion of citizens with current and past lived experiences of homelessness and addiction in the city's ongoing work to mitigate and solve the problems in the downtown core and elsewhere. The de-housed are experts in the obstacles they face, the challenges they endure, and what is most effective for surviving and managing the daily realities of addiction and homelessness. There can be no one more eager to reduce homelessness than those living on the street. There can be no one more eager to combat the drug toxicity crisis than those who live in fear of overdose and death. There can be no meaningful change without the enthusiastic participation of the vulnerable citizens at the heart of this issue, and the only way to ensure that participation is to give them a seat at the table, which they deserve to have by virtue of their democratic human dignity. Their expertise is vital if we are to create solutions that are practical, impactful, and accessible, and we believe the city's inability in the past to recognize the value of this lived expertise has been a barrier to meaningful change and a major contributor to the many controversies that have erupted over this issue recently.

'Together We Stand!!' is eager to put those conflicts behind us and move forward as allies of the City, Chamber of Commerce, service providers, and other stakeholders. In order for that to be possible, though, Prince George's de-housed community must be recognized as equal citizens deserving of the City's ear and support just as much as the business community, the social services network, and the housed public. As it stands now, there is often very little trust of the city and of other institutions among the de-housed, which is hardly surprising considering the harm and destruction they are often subjected to, including the mistaken destruction of many homes at the Lower Patricia encampment in November 2022.

In line with all these considerations, and in order to begin the work on building that trust, we are calling on the City of Prince George to meet with representatives from 'Together We Stand!!,' formally or informally, and create a plan for a "Representative Prince George Leadership Table" to deliberate and take action on people-centred and evidence-based approaches to shape a safer and more inclusive community. Reconciliation and decolonization must also be at the heart of this work.

We also request invitations to the leadership table be made to leaders of Indigenous organizations and those who serve the de-housed community, such as:

United Northern Drug Users (UNDU)
POUNDS Project
Central Interior Native Health
Positive Living North
Carrier Sekani Family Services
Friendship Centre
Community Partners Addressing Homelessness
First Nations Health Authority

Humility is essential to effective, compassionate leadership, and Prince George has an opportunity to choose a different path; to pioneer radical new approaches to these crises that place their vulnerable victims at the centre, treating them as a community to be supported rather than a problem to be solved.

We hope you will choose that path.

Sincerely,

'Together We Stand!!'