
From: cityclerk
Subject: FW: Lower Patricia Encampment

From: Johnston Family [Redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, April 11, 2023 10:56 AM
To: cityclerk <cityclerk@princegeorge.ca>; Mayor Yu, Simon <Simon.Yu@princegeorge.ca>; Councillor Bennett, Tim <Tim.Bennett@princegeorge.ca>; Councillor Frizzell, Garth <Garth.Frizzell@princegeorge.ca>; Councillor Klassen, Trudy <Trudy.Klassen@princegeorge.ca>; Councillor Polillo, Ron <Ron.Polillo@princegeorge.ca>; Councillor Ramsay, Cori <Cori.Ramsay@princegeorge.ca>; Councillor Sampson, Kyle <Kyle.Sampson@princegeorge.ca>; Councillor Scott, Susan <Susan.Scott@princegeorge.ca>; Councillor Skakun, Brian <Brian.Skakun@princegeorge.ca>
Subject: Lower Patricia Encampment

Please include this correspondence on the April 12, 2023 Council meeting agenda.

Dear Mayor and Council,

We are writing to express our concerns with the Lower Patricia Encampment, also known as Moccasin Flats, as well as the proposed changes to the City of Prince George Parks and Open Spaces Bylaw No. 7370, 2022, Amendment Bylaw No. 9389, 2023.

City Administration states in their staff report to council (April 4, 2023) for the April 12, 2023 Council meeting, " the encampment continues to be a hazard to human health and life safety..."

Centralizing encampments and individuals camping overnight that are found throughout the City of Prince George into the encampment located in the Lower Patricia area is not the solution. It appears the City is more interested in scrubbing homelessness from our city's image and sweeping it under the carpet into one place that conveniently is out of sight for most of Prince George residents and visitors. If this one encampment is a hazard to human health and safety, how does adding more people to it improve health and safety for those individuals? While we recognize that the City of Prince George is not responsible to provide housing, mental health and addictions services, that this responsibility falls on the Provincial Government, something needs to change immediately. We are tired of having this issue bounced between various levels of government and inaction continuing. Right now, this is a community issue impacting all of our residents and our City Council & Administration needs to step up and do something more, and ideally not something that provides good optics but no positive impact.

Our family has lived in the Millar Addition since 1996. We are proud to be 'downtown residents'. The City of Prince George is working hard to incorporate living spaces in the downtown core yet they seem to forget that the neighbourhoods surrounding the downtown area have individuals and families that work downtown, go to school in the surrounding downtown area, shop & play in the downtown area, spend funds with downtown businesses and restaurants. We walk to work, walk to school, clean up the green spaces, have pride in our neighbourhood and are informal stewards of a heritage neighbourhood. Our neighbourhood is resilient! Over the years we have dealt with prostitution being pushed from the downtown area into our neighbourhood, pollution and severe air quality issues from industry coming down the river and into our neighbourhood, the Biker House and fear of gang wars in our neighbourhood, continued lack of a properly highlighted cross walk on Queensway by Connaught Drive, continued speeding in our neighbourhood due to visitors to the park, the recent closure of a convenience store, recent addition of a liquor store, drug and squatters houses in our

neighbourhood, addition of shelters and low income housing in our neighbourhood, the City bungling the original issue of an encampment by trying to get an injunction, and regular acts of crime and aggression to our residents due to the encampment, along with a reduced quality of life due to the stress related to this situation, the daily interaction with drug paraphernalia, increased vehicle traffic when other city residents drive down our streets and park along Patricia Boulevard when there is a fire occurring, the smell and view of garbage piling up, and our worry for our safety. Our insurance rates are increasing, we are taking on additional costs due to installing security features, and our property values are decreasing. On top of all this, City Administration is recommending "enhanced security measures" which "may provide a feeling of increased safety for nearby residents and businesses." This feels like a slap in the face. We don't want to 'feel' safe, we want to be safe!!!

Please abandon the amendment to the Parks and Open Spaces Bylaw, which will only permit overnight camping/encampments in the Lower Patricia area and nowhere else in PG. This is not a safe or healthy solution for the homeless population in Prince George.

Please step up and take on some temporary responsibilities. Some first steps are:

1) Install Security Cameras (CCTV) on the corner of 4th Ave and Lower Patricia Boulevard - not for surveillance of the encampment, but for monitoring and deterring the individuals in Prince George who bring their garbage to this area to illegally dump.

2) Clean up the garbage pile that is growing on the corner of 4th Avenue and Lower Patricia Boulevard. It stinks, it's a massive eyesore, it's unsafe and it catches fire regularly. It's adding to the problem.

3) Stop taking a passive management approach and instead actively manage the encampment - provide services to the site and the occupants (garbage, water, washrooms, etc...) and manage where shelters are built and the type of shelters built. Please also manage what items are stored in the encampment (the propane tank piles are very concerning!). If a structure burns down, remove it. The reality is that we already have an unmanageable problem so saying that taking on an active management approach will cause unmanageable problems is ignoring the reality of the current situation. We know that due to the court order, this encampment is not closing anytime soon so let's make it a better space for those residents and for the surrounding businesses and neighbourhoods.

4) Follow through on the vow to speak to our neighbourhood - we've heard the mayor say he will, we've heard the City say they will communicate with us, however we hear nothing. We are not feeling heard or validated. We have ideas and we want to be part of the solution. I get that residents and businesses are angry and talking with us will be uncomfortable but let's embrace that discomfort (this is a polarizing issue!) and address it together.

5) Provide more 24 hour police and security patrols, in the encampment, in the entire Millar Connaught neighbourhoods, and in the affected surrounding downtown business area.

6) Continue to advocate strongly for Prince George to serve as a pilot community to implement the new Provincial response teams and housing and set a timeline for this to occur by.

7) Pull the loose strings...for example, find out where in PG we have unused housing spaces managed by BC Housing and advocate for these spaces to be made available asap. Put aside the 'not our jurisdiction' argument and inquire, advocate, and propose solutions that will make an immediate positive impact. Work Together!!!

Thank you,
Laura & Danny Johnston

1657 Cedar Street





