

April 15, 2024

Dear Mayor Yu and City Councilors,

As a senior and a thirty-five-year resident of Miller Addition, I am writing to you to voice concerns about the serious health and safety issues the residents of Miller Addition face as a direct result of the Moccasin Flats Encampment.

Up until the establishment of Moccasin Flats Encampment, Miller Addition was one of the most beautiful, 'peaceful' and 'safe' neighborhoods in all Prince George. We could freely walk through the neighborhood and adjoining parks of Lheidli T'enneh Memorial Park and Cottonwood Island Park and Patricia Boulevard feeling safe and worry free. When meeting neighbors while out walking, riding bikes, at house parties or our annual neighborhood block party we laughed and talked about family, friends, our kids, and upcoming events - the fun things in life.

But all that changed when the tent encampment crept into Lower Patricia and the evils associated with it crept into our neighborhood. We witness thieves roaming our streets and alleyways at night, breaking into vehicles, backyard storage sheds and houses stealing whatever they can get their hands on. We hear of neighbors being verbally threatened by thieves and watch as drug deals and drug use take place in front of schools and on park benches.

As the size of Moccasin Flats has increased, we have been subjected to the daily noxious, toxic smoke coming up from the many fires burning on Lower Patricia. So toxic is the smoke that we have the highest Toxic Air in all of Prince George recorded by Purple Air, often 10X, 50X, 100X and greater than any other area in the city.

And with the increased size of Moccasin Flats has come the increased accumulation of garbage and combustible materials increasing the danger of a catastrophic fire that could easily engulf all of Miller Addition. Case in point was the large fire in the evening of March 28th that started below Cedar Street and Patricia Boulevard. While watching TV my wife and I heard a large bang. I ran up to Patricia to see a fire truck stationed on the Boulevard and when I looked over the bank, I saw a large truck trailer and surrounding combustibles engulfed in fire and flames spreading towards the embankment and shooting high into the sky. That night while the firemen fought the fire in Moccasin Flats the toxic smoke and embers were blown by a north wind over the fire truck on Patricia Blvd and were landing in a neighbor's yard and on their roof. I ran to the neighbor's house and helped them evacuate to another part of town and then I stayed behind to stomp on the embers in their front yard. The next day I returned to the neighbor's yard to see many burnt embers on their grass and

after their neighbor behind them on Cedar Street said he had all ash all over his house and roof.

With Spring here, like in the past few years, the size of Moccasin Flats is expanding with new tents and plywood/tarp enclosures moving further east and up into the trees along the Patricia embankment. With further eastward expansion comes increased fear of more fires as witnessed last week with an encampment fire in the trees on the embankment below Birch Street. Where are the limits of Moccasin Flats, the boundaries for safety? There seems to be no limits!

Fire, theft and drug use are not the only things that have changed our neighborhood. Our peaceful, tranquil neighborhood has been transformed into a 'war zone' with the almost daily sound of explosions, be that bear bangers, gun shots, exploding propane tanks or tires. Countless times a week various 'Facebook' pages light up with residents questioning if anyone else heard the explosion and what it might be. And with the sound of explosions comes the sound of police, fire, or ambulance sirens. Hardly a day goes by that we are not startled by a crisis unfolding in Moccasin Flats.

A few days ago, I spoke with a retired couple from College Heights who drove down to Patricia Blvd. to see for themselves what Moccasin Flats was all about. They were both shocked and stunned by what they saw and said that they never knew it was so bad. They said, 'the people are living in a garbage dump, how could this have happened'? I replied that no they are not living in a garbage dump as a dump has regulations and is monitored, garbage is sorted, fires are not burning everywhere, and people do not live in the dump!

Sadly, the establishment of Moccasin Flats has seriously affected the health and safety of the residents of Miller Addition and no more so than the mental health of the residents, especially those that live on or close to Patricia Blvd. Residents are fearful that their vehicles will be broken into or their possessions in their yard will be stolen or worse, their homes will be broken into when they are away or at home. Residents are fearful that as the summer dries out and the wildfire danger level increases across BC, that another out-of-control fire from Moccasin Flats will breach Patricia Blvd. and catch any number of homes on fire. Residents are also fearful that the toxic smoke constantly blowing into Millar Addition will negatively impact their health, especially for residents who already suffer respiratory illnesses. What will happen when there is another fire or wildfire in another part of the city and there are not enough fire trucks to attend another Moccasin Flats Fire? Why is there no fire mitigation or emergency plan?

No other residential neighborhood in Prince George must endure the constant barrage of the multiple health and safety issues as the residents of Millar Addition. Where else do

you worry whether the bang you heard as you were going to sleep was a gunshot or an exploding propane tank? Where else in Prince George do you worry if your house or vehicle will be broken into tonight? Where else do look across a residential street and see an encampment littered with garbage, piles of combustibles and remnants of burnt-out camps? Where else in a residential area of Prince George do you fear walking alone or tell your children or wife not to walk in certain areas for fear of what they might encounter? Where else in the city is your fear so great that you are afraid to report incidences to the Police or City officials? Where else in the city do the Firemen attending a fire, By-Law Enforcement Officers or Police attending a call say to you “sorry you live here”!

Mayor Yu and Council Members, we in Miller Addition deserve better. We don't want to live in fear of the unknown, we don't want to hear 'sorry you live here' and we don't want to hear “our hands are tied.” No other situation exists where conditions that endanger the health and safety of others are allowed to go unattended.

When we see that you only recently walked down Patrica Blvd. to view what was going on in Moccasin Flats, even though countless calls have gone into Bylaws, the Fire Dept and Police, even though the Police and Fire Dept. submitted their yearly report to you, we wonder why you have not kept a closer eye on the reality of Moccasin Flats?

We, the residents of Miller Addition, must know and feel that our concerns are being heard and not dismissed. Don't tell us 'You understand,' because unless you live with this around you, hear this night and day, feel the fear, you don't understand! Only your ACTIONS will tell us you have heard us. And only when you engage with us, invite us to be members of your action teams will we believe you are serious and care. We are not part of the problem!

And to help us means helping the individuals living in Moccasin Flats, as well. They deserve to live in better conditions in a location that does not come into contact or jeopardizes the health and safety of our residential neighborhood – once one of the best neighborhoods to live in Prince George.

Respectfully submitted,

Christian Lear