

**From:** \*redacted  
**To:** [cityclerk](#)  
**Cc:** [Councillor Klassen, Trudy](#); [Amelia Merrick \(merricka2\)](#)  
**Subject:** Moccasin Flats and the Millar Addition  
**Date:** Wednesday, April 17, 2024 3:54:50 PM

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Dear Mayor Yu and Council,

We are living in an interesting time, where the incredible imbalances in wealth and connection in our community, are becoming difficult to ignore. We know that between the federal government, the provincial government and the municipal government, taxpayers are spending \$100,000 to \$150,000, per year, per homeless person, purportedly to correct the situation, and yet the homeless situation grows and many people are living under cardboard without basic amenities. If we have 300 homeless people in Prince George, that means taxpayers are forking out between \$30 million and 45 million per year to address homelessness. All this money, every year, is being funnelled through many agencies and non profits tasked with managing the homeless problem. Judging by what we are seeing, we are not getting satisfactory results for the money we are spending. I think all the agencies implicated need to be more transparent about how this money is being spent.

My name is April Ottesen and I have lived in the Millar Addition for 23 years. I have cooked meals regularly on Sundays for the past two years, and with many volunteers have served these meals to the folks residing at Moccasin Flats, every Sunday night. My purpose is to help, to help feed people nutritious food, to help provide people with community and connection. Most of the folks we serve are struggling to get adequate shelter and proper nutrition. One of my former employees who now lives at Moccasin Flats lost a finger last week due to complications from frostbite. I don't think there is a prison in North America that has worse conditions than Moccasin Flats. We are currently feeding between 50 and 60 people. The food I use is 100% sourced from donations.

Two years ago I also started a community garden with the help of volunteers and the folks residing at Moccasin Flats. I am working on a food forest, to provide some simple food solutions, the skills to grow food, and to provide people with the healing and restorative experience of working in the dirt with plants and seeds. People need connection and they need purpose.

During the past two years I have been observing the situation at Moccasin Flats from a front row seat. I have watched as concern for the well being of some very marginalized

people took a back seat to confusion, tension, fear of lack of safety, concern for air quality and feelings of a lack of control over our yards and homes. What I do know is that it is not easy to climb out of the kind of poverty we are seeing at Moccasin Flats, compounded by mental illness and drug addiction. I also know that the folks at Moccasin Flats also fear for their safety, and the safety of their meager possessions, and unfortunately, many of these residents are existing mostly in survival mode, so cannot see much beyond that.

One of the main complaints I hear about Moccasin Flats is the unsightly heaps of trash everywhere. I ask you to consider what the rest of Prince George would look like if we did not enjoy weekly trash pick up. City of Prince George could provide all Moccasin Flats households with a municipal trash can that is picked up weekly. This would alleviate a lot of complaints and give the poor folks at MF more agency in their reality. There would also be less inappropriate materials left behind for burning.

People need to be able to stay warm; it would be the humane thing to do, to provide folks with that ability. Many people in the Prince George community are willing to contribute firewood if there were a central picnic shelter with a fire pit, where people could gather, to keep warm, and to cook their food. I still think funding could be found to install a proper campground at Moccasin Flats, with basic campground amenities. I think this would serve us all.

Another complaint I have heard is that too many of the folks from Moccasin Flats are wandering around the Millar Addition neighbourhood during the day. An excellent solution would be to have somewhere else for the people to go, shelters that are open during the day, staffed by people who treat the homeless with dignity and respect.

There are many issues our community is being asked to consider in this situation of a homeless encampment with few basic amenities for survival, and held hostage by drug dealers, existing in close proximity to the Millar Addition. I think we have to start by having some frank discussions, laying everything on the table, identifying everyone who needs to be at the table, and identifying our collective resources. What I am wishing for are solutions that are humane and inclusive for all.

Yours very truly,

April Ottesen