

To: Mayor and Council, City of Prince George

CC: City of Prince George Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs, MLA Kiel Giddens, MLA Rosalyn Bird, MLA Sheldon Clare, MP Todd Doherty, MP Bob Zimmer

From: Cassie Savage

Date: 09/09/2025

Re: Advocacy for Involuntary Treatment Facilities and Comprehensive Addiction Services

Hello Mayor and Council,

At the suggestion of Councillor Sampson, I am writing to share my family's story directly with all of you. He encouraged me to put this in writing so that my brother's experience could add weight to the advocacy you are already doing with the Province and Federal government for resources that I believe could have given my brother a different outcome. I'm writing not just as a resident of Prince George, but as a sister and daughter whose family has been devastated by the gaps in our addiction and mental health support systems. My hope is that sharing our story will help strengthen and further your advocacy efforts, because without action from senior government, these tragedies will keep repeating.

Our Family's Experience

Redacted

The System That Failed Him

Redacted

Redacted

Why Involuntary Treatment Matters

I understand that the concept of involuntary treatment makes people uncomfortable, and I respect concerns about human rights and personal autonomy. But addiction is a disease that literally hijacks the brain's decision-making capabilities, and for people like my brother, who in their rare moments of clarity want help but can't hold on to that rational decision, temporary involuntary care with clear clinical criteria and proper oversight can be the lifeline that keeps them alive long enough for recovery to start. This is not about punishment. It is about medical intervention when someone cannot choose survival for themselves.

A Call for Council Leadership

I understand that the City of Prince George does not directly operate the RCMP, court systems, or hospitals. But every member of this Council has the platform, and the ability, to advocate loudly and forcefully to the Province for the resources our community needs. Families like mine are suffering while waiting for those services, and that reality is impossible to ignore.

Part of why I reached out to Councillor Sampson was because I share his stance on the issues I believe are part of the solution. That conversation encouraged me to share my story with all of you, because I agree with the call for stronger advocacy on things like involuntary treatment and real accountability. It gave me confidence that my brother's experience could add to the work you are already doing.

The challenges we face with addiction, homelessness, and community safety demand collaboration at every level of government. I know Council can't fix this crisis alone, but your advocacy and persistence matter. Downtown business owners, healthcare workers, frontline staff, and families across every neighbourhood are feeling the weight of a system that isn't working, and you can use your position to help reduce the burden.

I urge you to continue standing together and pushing hard with one voice. These issues aren't about political differences, they're about saving lives, protecting families, and keeping our community safe. Please keep raising these issues until Victoria and Ottawa deliver the changes only they can make.

What we need from the Province

Based on my family's experience and what I see happening in our community every day, I believe the following steps are critical and mandatory, and are the responsibility of senior governments to deliver.

We need involuntary treatment facilities in the North with clear admission criteria and proper oversight. Facilities that can intervene when someone is no longer able to choose survival for themselves.

We need urgent access to detox and rehabilitation services close to home, not waitlists that stretch for months or systems that say 'come back later' when someone finally asks for help. Addiction doesn't wait, and neither can treatment.

We need mental health supports that meet people where they are and follow them after discharge to prevent them from slipping through the cracks again.

We need justice system reforms that break the revolving door cycle and sentencing that connects people with treatment instead of simply releasing them until the next arrest.

Most critically, we need real coordination between health, housing, and justice systems, because right now these systems too often work against each other. When one system undoes the work of another, families like mine bear the consequences.

Moving Forward

My brother's story is not unique. The chaos we are witnessing in our community is not only an addiction crisis, but also a policy crisis. I know there is not a single fix to address the complexity of addiction in our community, but I also know that staying where we are guarantees more preventable deaths, more crime, and more broken families.

I support a path that protects public safety and saves lives. A path with firm boundaries and consequences for crime, paired with real treatment that is readily available when needed. These goals are not in conflict, and they have to live together.

Please keep advocating hard on behalf of families like mine. Keep bringing our stories into the room with the Province and the Federal government. We need them to deliver treatment capacity, justice changes, and coordinated services. Your voices carry, and your persistence matters.

Thank you for your time and for hearing my family's story. If details from our experience would help your advocacy, I am prepared to share them.

Respectfully,

Cassie Savage

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