
Subject: Comments on proposed nuisance bylaw/ unhoused people

From: mary macdonald Redacted
Sent: Monday, June 14, 2021 12:51 PM
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To the mayor and City Council of Prince George.

First, i would like to say, I have worked as a frontline social worker with marginalized people in Prince George for well over 15 years now, and I make these comments with this background. I am deeply concerned about the nuisance bylaw currently before you for your consideration.

I have had opportunity to speak now with a number of the unhoused persons staying in tents in various locations around Prince George, I would say that just about all the people I have chatted with have immense unresolved grief and trauma in their lives which has been severely compounded this past year due to COVID and overdose deaths of many loved ones.... these people are in survival mode, and many are needing to use substances as a coping mechanism.

A punitive approach focused on ongoing displacement and fines is not the right approach in my perspective. People do not respond well to such a punitive approach and all it will do is drive people who already have a large degree of hopelessness, fear, despair in their lives to a much worse place, rejected and disenfranchised from community. It won't solve the root issues of concern, the substance use challenges and the crime rate. I believe deeply that as a community we need to work to support these people in a compassionate manner as they work toward a sense of safety and eventual healing in their lives.

As recently noted by Chief Terry Teegee and other Indigenous leaders, many of these peoples are descendants or survivors of the residential school travesty that occurred in our country, in addition a number of features of colonial oppression (racism) continue to exist in the various services they need to access - many of the services they need are too high barrier and rigid at this time for them to be able to access as needed.

Thus, in my opinion, the City really needs to work in a collaborative manner with the other agencies who have a responsibility to provide for these people.

I will be standing in opposition to this nuisance bylaw outside City Hall this evening. A number of unhoused people plan to attend also and hopefully will speak; I would love to see you all come out to listen directly to these people as part of your deliberations.

I support the following:

- Proposed amendments to bylaws No. 7370, 2002 and No. 9211, 2021 increase chaos to homeless and precariously housed persons and the social service agencies who support them. These amendments are harmful to people, unhelpful for Indigenous organizations, non-profits and social service agencies, damaging to businesses and expensive. We recommend that mayor and council *immediately reject these bylaw amendments* as they will further escalate chaos in our city.
- **Implement an emergency shelter plan that responds to people's realities, is based on respect, human dignity and reflects the Canadian Chart of Rights and Freedoms.** Homeless individuals are exhausted from being misplaced on a daily basis and inappropriate shelter puts people at higher risk of overdose death. Prince George does not have an adequate supply of appropriate shelter which considers the unique needs of individuals, including the need for longer-term stay including day times use, the need to store belongings, and the need to be accommodated with partners or pets. Appropriate shelter also recognizes that sobriety should not be a condition for shelter. We demand that the City and *Province expedite low-barrier shelter options and in the meantime, provide a secure designated space for people to sleep outdoors, store their belongings, defecate, urinate and wash.*
- **Create a reasonable long-term housing-first plan that ensures all homeless people have appropriate housing options before January 2, 2022 when the L'heidli Tenneh flag is raised again.** The cost for institutional service (police, bylaw, ambulance, health, mental health) far outways a housing first solution.
- **Increase social services and programs to support homeless and precariously housed community members.** As a result of COVID-19, 75% of non-profit organizations in the Fraser Fort George reduced, canceled or changed in-person program. We demand an increase in resources (financial, staffing, political commitment, etc.) to social services and programs, especially Indigenous agencies.
- **Ensure homeless and precariously housed community members are engaged in democratic processes, and are part of creating reasonable emergency and long-term housing solutions.**

Sincerely submitted by,

Mary MacDonald LL.B, MSW, RSW