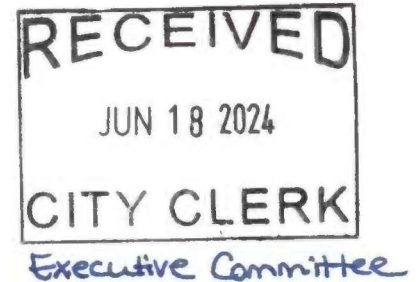


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**Recommended
Disposition:**
Refer to
Community
Development



2024-06-18

Good day, Mayor and Councillors.

From the 2013 Community Mobilization Prince Albert report, released by the COR Advisory Committee,

“Total Costs of our Top 25 Heavy Users of Services Inclusive of nights in police cells, police resource costs, brief and social detox stays, emergency room visits and ambulance costs, the top 25 individuals have incurred a total of \$3,799,391 in approximate costs over the 3 year study period. This dollar figure accounts solely for the top 25 arrested and lodged for public intoxication and who are heavy users of services.”

I do not have access to updated statistics, however based upon recent personal observations of our city's downtown core, I would hazard a guess to suggest that the situation detailed in the report has not substantially improved, and may have actually gotten worse.

In what in any other city on the continent would be a jewel of their community, our riverfront and downtown core has been allowed to deteriorate into what can only be described as an abject embarrassment, and most of the rest of the city appears to be well on its way to following suit.

While our rights and freedoms are cherished aspects of our Canadian citizenship and identity, it is important to recognize that one person's rights must terminate where they impede on the rights of others. And while it is important to also protect the rights of minorities, these few people, who are sadly not in control of their mental faculties and/or social appetites, are trampling the rights of the entirety of our community to enjoy the amenities of what was *once named the third most desirable city in the country to live in*. We can no longer go downtown, to the riverbank, or even to the major shopping centres in Cornerstone and soon The Yards after dark and feel safe in our city. Relying again on anecdotal evidence rather than statistics, it appears that property crime, and especially violent crime, are surging in our community. Gangs are running beggars in the drive throughs, people are being shot in our community, and even abducted, while others are sleeping in the entranceways of local businesses. Business owners are forced to expend even more resources building fences, installing security gates, implementing security personnel and surveillance systems, and ultimately to accomplish nothing more than pushing the undesirable element off to the next property owner over. Who is ALSO a Prince Albertan taxpayer.

We, the majority, are footing the bill for our city's services, and we deserve to enjoy the fruits of our labours. As a society, we have determined to set our minimum bar at the point that we are unwilling to allow these people to freeze to death in the winter. If we agree that we are obliged to prevent their deaths, then why not go the extra mile and ensure that these people are actually healthy and well cared for, all year round? Why not provide a clean and safe place for them to live, where we know they will be warm, have access to hygienic facilities, be well fed and well cared for, where they would receive timely and appropriate medical care, and where they would be segregated from, and no longer burdensome to, our society at large?

If you consider all the municipalities across the province that are suffering the same problems, I believe the tens, if not hundreds of millions of dollars a year we are expending on NOT solving the problem would go a long way toward funding **a real solution**. We merely need someone with the political will to implement it.

And thus, I am writing you this letter. If it has not already been done, I propose that the city advocates to the provincial government for the following two changes to their current policies:

1. That the provincial government must reverse their decision to simply give money intended to provide housing to those persons who are dependant on social welfare and revert to paying their residential property owners directly. And that if such does not exist, to also implement some sort of food stamps program to ensure these same people have reliable access to food. Homelessness and hunger in the social welfare state of Canada are choices that a significant number of our people are clearly unable to make responsibly for themselves, and with the funding for the systems that we have in place, it is entirely appropriate for the government to make those better choices for them.
2. That the provincial government fund a pilot project in Prince Albert, establishing a local treatment/residential custodial centre on the outskirts of the city - perhaps at the old North Park Centre location, or one like it - *for the involuntary apprehension and treatment of those persons who require it due to mental health and addiction issues that prevent them from willfully seeking and/or accepting treatment*. I would propose a 25-bed facility, with room for expansion.

As responsible citizens, we can no longer resort to watchful waiting, hoping that someone else will 'fix it'. It has become clear that we must take the initiative to solve the problem ourselves, locally. To permit the continuation of the status quo is untenable; our city will sink to the level of the lowest common denominator, and we will become what our city's detractors have long ago named us.

The truth is, we are better than that.

And as a representative of our city's leadership in this election year, I challenge you to prove it.

Sincerely,



Mark Warner