



April 14, 2025

Rob Procyk

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To Mayor and Council,

This letter is in regard to the proposal regarding temporary shelter being located in the Dave Steuart Arena. Ultimately, I support a temporary shelter at whatever location is chosen, because it is our civic and our moral duty to care for and support our unhoused. I fervently believe that Donna Brooks and the YWCA have the best interests of the unhoused at heart, and I stand behind their work with the shelter. However, I do not support the current shelter area as a permanent location for the shelter, and I fear that city council will ultimately approve a permanent location at the temporary location. Downtown is undoubtedly the most logical location for a permanent shelter due to the accessibility of services in the downtown core. Thus, I would like to raise some questions regarding the Steuart Arena as a temporary shelter location, as the temporary location may have influence on a permanent location.

Is the Steuart Arena really the most cost-effective location for a temporary shelter? The City of Prince Albert estimates that the Steuart Arena needs a new roof, at a cost of \$610,000, as well as \$150,000 of capital improvements. If the Steuart Arena is decommissioned as a rink, there has been an additional estimated cost of \$25,000 to remove the boards and the chemical equipment from the ice plant. Further, any renovations would have to include possible asbestos abatement, as it is noted that there is asbestos in the floors and in the walls. As well, one would also have to ensure that the heating system was adequate to heat the area formerly occupied by the rink surface. It was identified that the arena needed a new roof 14 years ago, and the City has stated that this need cannot wait. Does this really seem like the most intuitive or cost effective location for a temporary shelter when such extensive and complicated repairs are needed?

Prior to the announcement of the Steuart Arena possibly becoming the temporary shelter, other user groups expressed interest in the arena. Council heard that the Prince Albert Exhibition Association expressed interest in purchasing the building to use as a show and trade building. PAGC has also expressed interest in the building as their sports and recreation centre, and the Director of Parks, Recreation, and Culture states on the City of Prince Albert website that the city “will be reaching out to all user groups to discuss the issue and invite them to put forward proposals for our consideration” regarding the Arena. Are these talks now overruled because of the temporary shelter location?

I urge city council to explore alternate options for the temporary shelter in the downtown. We have numerous empty buildings in the downtown core that are available, including the former Saskatchewan Liquor Store. Repairs and retrofitting other buildings in the downtown would surely be more cost efficient than repairing the Steuart Arena. As well, I would ask city council not to discredit the important work that went into the shelter surveys and community consultations. The number one shelter location based on the results of the public meetings and survey, which included over 150 forms and over 100 letters, were plugged into a scoring matrix, and the preferred shelter location was overwhelmingly in the downtown, close to the services regularly used by shelter residents. The motion to locate the shelter in Ward 3, near the current temporary location, disregards the civic responsibility of council to listen to both the data and needs of the homeless.

At the March 7th Executive Council meeting, counsellors urged that they needed more time to make a decision on the permanent shelter, with one counsellor stating that they needed more time and more consultation to get it right, so that we have a model that is the envy of other cities. However, at the March 24th Executive Council meeting, a motion was made and carried to put the permanent shelter at a location that scored the lowest of all the proposed options without any discussion. Again, why isn't the temporary shelter location being discussed with alternate locations?

I urge you to put the temporary shelter downtown. This could be used as a trial for the downtown and will hopefully show the business owners and the community that the shelter in the downtown is nothing to fear. As this location will be temporary for two years, it would allow city hall, community agencies, and the community at large to work together to show how a shelter in the downtown can indeed both improve the atmosphere downtown and, most importantly, help the unhoused connect easier with services and counselling. I am sure that a multi-faceted downtown community group that includes businesses, agencies, and wellness services could be established to show how our community can work together to make a temporary shelter in the downtown a success.

Finally, I would like Mayor and Council to see a snapshot of our downtown on a Saturday afternoon. The attached photos show encampments, litter, drug paraphernalia, graffiti, human waste, broken windows, and despair. Please note that this is occurring today, without a shelter in the downtown. These social issues already exist in the downtown core, and a shelter, no matter where it is located, will not remedy this. What is currently happening downtown is tragic, but it is already there. The issues facing downtown will not magically disappear if a shelter was downtown, but a shelter downtown will increase security in the area, will be well looked after and have a neat appearance, and, most importantly, might provide shelter and connections to services for those who do not wish to leave the downtown.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Procyk', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Rob Procyk







