

July 22, 2020



Open letter to Mayor and Council of the Town of Fort Frances.

In the time since the Volunteer Bureau, in conjunction with the Family Centre, has allowed people to pitch tents on the Old CN Station property there have been consistent issues created by people residing in the tents. Home owners in the area are regularly inspecting their property for dirty needles, feces and other trash left behind. The neighbours have called the police and by-law enforcement yet nothing appears to be being done about the issue. On Saturday, July 18th there were 5 reported overdoses at the location. The cost of the ambulances being called to the area will ultimately be paid by the taxpayers.

This situation gives rise to many questions.

- What is the mandate for the Volunteer Bureau?
- Does the director have the authority to allow this use of the property?
- Does this use of the property conform to the by-laws of the Town of Fort Frances?
- Is the Family Centre a registered charity?
- What is the mandate of the Family Centre?

The initial idea for the Family Centre was commendable and needed in the area, it was a place for women and children to drop in, a safe place to just hang out, have a cup of coffee and a chat. Donations were given of money, food and clothing to help the less fortunate predominantly single mothers, it was geared to women and children. Unfortunately, this changed and now you will not see many mothers and children in attendance when meals are served.

The Family Centre is now perceived as a place for homeless, addicted individuals to get a meal and a tent to sleep in. With no requirements for accountability or the need to be a productive member of the community that developed on the property. Instead they are free to do as they please, they roam the adjacent neighbourhood, at times making themselves at home on private property, defecating on lawns, hiding drugs in landscaping features and leaving dirty needles for children and/or pets to find.

The neighbours have called the police and by-law enforcement daily yet nothing appears to be being done about the issue. To the best of our knowledge by-law enforcement has not charged anyone involved in the situation under the nuisance by-law or the zoning by-law.

It is understood that the individuals residing at the Volunteer Bureau "need to be somewhere"! But we, as tax paying homeowners, have rights as well. This cluster of tents does not address the underlying issues of addiction and homelessness. It has created an environment where we and our families do not feel safe on our own property.

There is a need in the community for comprehensive help for these individuals. The Town of Fort Frances does not have the mandate to provide the required facilities, but working in conjunction with credible not for profit organizations and the area First Nations it could be done.

We realize that it is not the duty of the Town of Fort Frances to provide for these individuals, but it is within the duty of the Town to ensure the by-laws are adhered to, and to bring charges when warranted.

Respectfully

Residence of the area around the Volunteer Bureau

CC: Marcus Powlowski, Member of Parliament  
Greg Rickford, Member of Provincial Parliament  
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