

Rhonda West

From: Barb Puddifant
Sent: Monday, July 24, 2023 8:02 AM
To: Rhonda West
Subject: FW: [External] Letter of Support for Proposed Fraser Ave Shelter, from Harbourfront Drive Resident

From: TJ Wallis [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, July 22, 2023 3:26 PM
To: Barb Puddifant <bpuddifant@salmonarm.ca>; communityrelations@bchousing.org
Subject: [External] Letter of Support for Proposed Fraser Ave Shelter, from Harbourfront Drive Resident

I am writing to express my support of the proposed homeless shelter on Fraser Ave in Salmon Arm.

I live on Harbourfront Drive and occasionally the residents in my building have come across someone using our outside electrical outlets to charge their cell phone. Someone used our power to boil a kettle for a cup-of-soup and left their garbage behind. For me, this is such a minor irritation.

I am not so bothered that I would deny someone housing because they've had the nerve to take shelter under cover. I share some of the neighbourhood concerns, but I believe they can be addressed by City and CMHA.

Having a shelter will mean the clients will have electrical outlets there. It will mean boiling water for soup will happen there. It will mean someone who slept rough for a long time will have a warm place to sleep. I can't object to that. In a perfect world, everyone would be housed.

My father lived on Vancouver's skid row for 8 years, not because he was a useless human being, but because he had suffered unimaginable tragedy and he coped by using alcohol and drugs. When he was ready to receive a hand up, in the form of subsidized housing in downtown Vancouver, my father recovered. He went back to work as a roofer. He remarried. He lived in that same subsidized apartment until he passed away, more than 25 years later. My father was not a failed human because he didn't have a home for so long. There is no such thing as a failed human.

I read some recent social media comments, directed toward the unhoused people who are currently set up on Fraser Ave. The commenters were reacting to a story about an assault of a man who had been looking for his granddaughter in the area. The gist of the comments was, "Those people can't be helped" or "The more you give the more they will take". There were several comments about vigilantism. Though I know Salmon Arm residents raise legitimate concerns, housed people have a duty to act within the law, too, and it is my sincere hope that what I read on social media was just hyperbole.

It is better to offer warmth and comfort than to punish those whose stories we do not know. We have a tendency to blame people for their circumstances, treat them as less than. We forget that every person has a story. Every person has value.

Surely, a shelter is the least we can do.

Sincerely

TJ Wallis

[REDACTED] Harbourfront Drive NE, Salmon Arm, BC V1E 3M3

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