

Ending Homelessness in Regina
June 2022

Regina City Council: Submission of Planned Speech to Council

Dr. Carl Cherland

1. Homelessness hurts and shames Regina and its reputation.

- We are a provincial capital. We want to be proud of our city.
- But we have people living in their cars! People sleeping in doorways of our buildings. Tent cities in our parks. As a community we need to do better.
- Homelessness hurts Regina. It hurts our reputation as a thriving and caring community. It hurts our businesses. It is a stain on our reputation when we have people living on the streets, when people have to panhandle, pushing their shopping carts around with all their worldly goods in them.
- The motto of our city is “Floreat Regina.” But Regina will **never** flourish until we have homes for all our citizens. If homelessness is OK in Regina, then, we need to change the motto of our city. Homelessness is NOT OK. We should start addressing homelessness today, by passing this motion to include \$5.5 million (from our city’s \$800 million dollar budget) for affordable housing for the homeless. Please!

2. Tolerating Homelessness Is Expensive

- Voting for this motion is a much less expensive way to address homelessness than doing nothing, and having to deal with the emergency costs that homelessness produces over time.
- Homelessness increases ill health, and poor mental health, and it increases the need for more police and policing (or we think it does).
- For every dollar we spend for housing and social services, we save \$8-10 for emergency police, and hospitalizations. A stitch in time saves nine.

- More affordable housing decreases costs by improving the health of people who would otherwise be homeless. It improves mental health, and increases safety. Affordable housing, as provided for in the motion, addresses homelessness. It will help eliminate homelessness.
- Homeless people are economic refugees.
- The Bible says human beings are made in the image of God. No one who is made in the image of God should suffer and die on the streets of Regina. I know most of you councillors believe that. A budget is a statement of values. A budget concretely demonstrates values.
- This has implications for Truth and Reconciliation. Many, though not all, of the homeless are indigenous people. We need a budget that shows it respects and values indigenous people, who are over represented among the poor and the homeless.

3. Homelessness has everything to do with religious faith and ethics.

- People without a vision suffer. Where do we find a vision of the world that rejects homelessness?
- I am a member of the Christian faith community at Our Savior's Lutheran Church. Today I am speaking for that community, specifically for its Justice and Peace Ministry Team.
- As Christians who follow Jesus, who try to love our neighbours as ourselves, we know we can't allow people to live through a brutal winter on the streets; we can't allow people to die on the streets.
- We have to serve other people in need. That is our vision.
- Here is another vision. **The United Nations Charter of Human Rights**, passed by the United Nations in 1948, states in Article 25 that everyone has a right to a safe home. That is key point in the charter.
- For all people of faith (not just Christians) this point from the UN Charter of Human Rights aligns with what we believe God wants us to do. There are

many faith communities in the 150 countries that have signed this statement of vision.

- The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples also includes the right to housing. I repeat, we take real steps toward reconciliation with Indigenous peoples here in Regina (and with non-indigenous people too) when we call for housing for the homeless.
- Everyone needs a home. Single **White** women with children need affordable housing too, not just people of colour, not just women of colour. Domestic violence hurts ALL women. ALL kinds of women need a safe place to live.
- Charity can only go so far to alleviate suffering . A safe and sturdy home would go much further.
- Many of us believe that the disappearance of the social safety networks are what creates homelessness. When we fail to care for others, we lose our collective humanity. (We should be asking, What do you need? How can I help you?)
- We need to share our resources, stand in solidarity with the poor and the excluded. We need to be in tune with the morals of a just and fair society.

4. Let's pass this motion.

- The motion that you are voting on tonight speaks directly for moving in the right direction, to assist people struggling with homelessness in Regina. We ask you to pass this motion. It needs to be in the draft budget now.
- As a community, we need to do better. We CAN and WILL do better if this motion is passed. Regina **will flourish** when not just a few of us, but ALL of us living in this community, have access to housing and the hope of the rights listed in the UN Charter of Human Rights. Their list includes access to housing and shelter.

- You are aware that in 2018 a motion was passed by City Council to end homelessness within 5 years. With my advanced mathematical ability I have figured out that we need to do that by 2023, next year!
- We have been told that the “hidden homeless” in Regina number about 6800. We can begin to end homelessness, we can address economic disparities in our city, we can begin to do our best under not ideal circumstances.
- This is a logical and doable step. We are asking you to pass this motion into the draft budget, today.