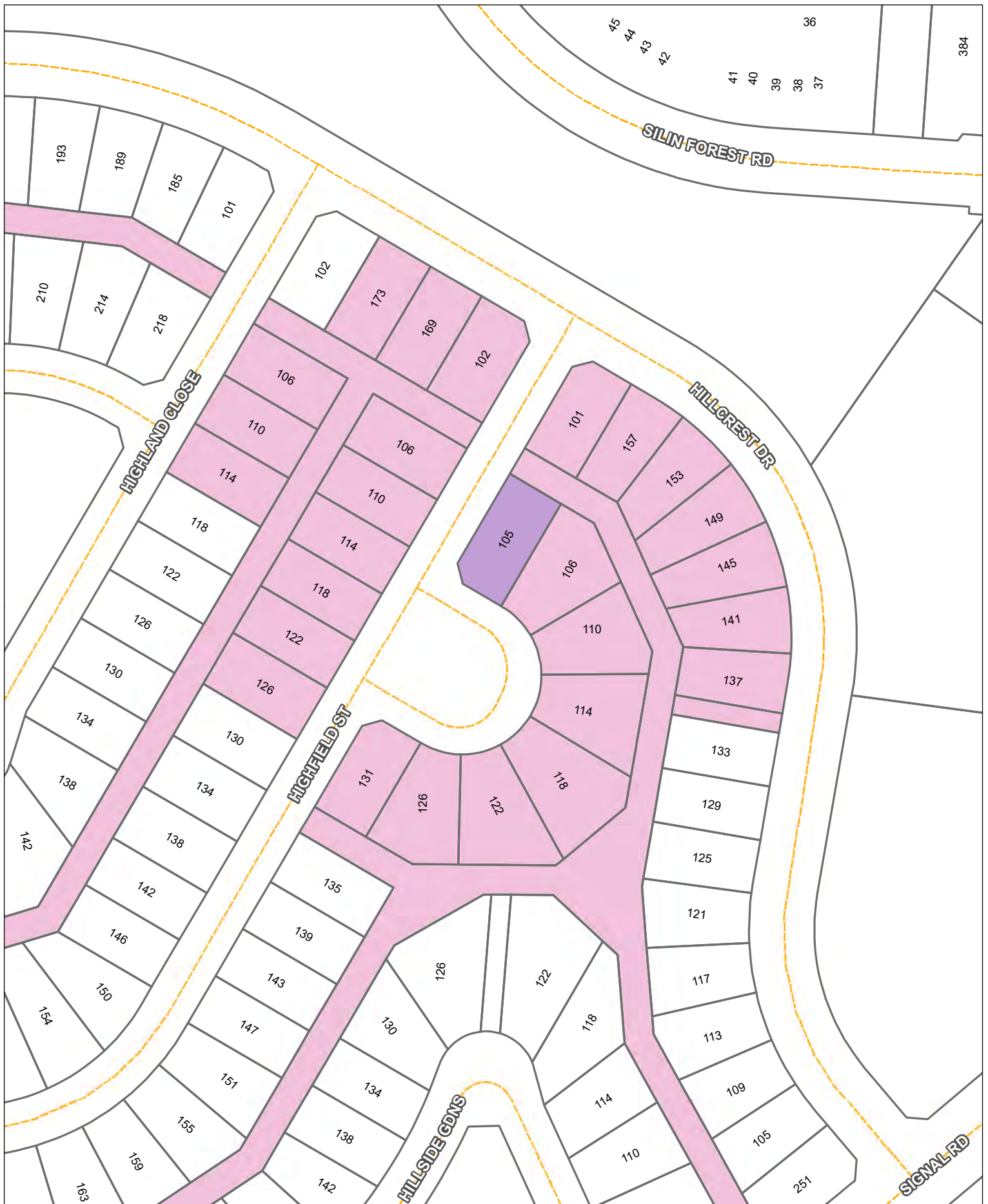


## EXHIBIT LIST

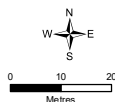
File Number	Appellant
SDAB 2025-008	Lisa Stewart

Legal Description	Civic Address
Lot 19, Block 42, Plan 762 0092	105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB

Exhibit #	Description	Filing Date
	<b>Subject Area Map</b>	<b>2025-11-14</b>
1.	Notice of Appeal (3 pages)	2025-11-12
2.	Development Permit No. 2025-DP-00321 (11 pages)	2025-11-12
3.	Summary of Testimonial Evidence – Appellant (1 page)	2026-01-19
4.	Disclosure of Evidence – Development Permit Applicant (151 pages)	2026-01-19
5.	Disclosure of Evidence – Planner's Report (153 pages)	2026-01-19



- Subject Area
- Notification Property within 60m
- Survey Parcels



**105 Highfield Street**  
**Lot 19, Block 42, Plan 7620092**



Map Produced by the Geographic  
 Information Systems  
**Page 2**  
 Ticket: 25111305  
 14 Nov 2025





Wood Buffalo  
TRIBUNALS

SUBDIVISION AND DEVELOPMENT APPEAL BOARD  
**NOTICE OF APPEAL**

In accordance with Section 678 and 686 of the Municipal Government Act and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Land Use Bylaw 99/059, an appeal to the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board must be filed within the legislated time frame.

**Section 1 – Property Information**

Legal Land Description (i.e. Lot, Block, Plan or ATS 1/4 Sec-Twp-Rng-Mar)

Lot <b>19</b>	Block <b>42</b>	Plan <b>762 0092</b>	ATS
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Civic Address  
**105 Highfield St., Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2**

Development Permit Number or type of Order  
**2025-DP-00321**

**Section 2 - Appellant Information**

NB: At the time of the appeal hearing the individual acting as agent must produce the completed and signed Agent Authorization Form.

Appellant Name (If the Appellant is a company, enter the complete legal name of the company)

**Lisa Stewart**

Agent<sup>1</sup> Name (if applicable)

Contact Name (if different) and position held

Mailing Address <b>ATIA 20(1)</b>	City/Town <b>ATIA 20(1)</b>	Province <b>ATIA 20(1)</b>	Postal Code
--------------------------------------	--------------------------------	-------------------------------	-------------

Telephone Number (Daytime) <b>ATIA 20(1)</b>	Alternate Telephone Number	E-mail Address <b>ATIA 20(1)</b>
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**Section 3 – Appeal** (Check One Box Only) for multiple appeals you must submit another Notice of Appeal

**Development Permit**

**Subdivision Application**

**Notice of Order**

☒ Approval  
☐ Condition of Approval  
☐ Refusal

☐ Approval  
☐ Condition of Approval  
☐ Refusal

☐ Notice of Order

☐ I/We are the Applicant or Land Owner of the subject property

☒ I/We are a person affected by an order, decision or development permit

**Section 4 – Reasons for Appeal**

Section 678 and 686 Municipal Government Act require that the written Notice of Appeal must contain specific reasons for the appeal. In support of your appeal, you are requested to provide a full statement of the grounds and reasons of your appeal. You may include any photographs, drawings or plans for clarification.

I/We hereby appeal the decision of the Approval Authority for the following reason(s):

**Please see Attachment 1.**

(Attach a separate page if required)

PLEASE SEE REVERSE FOR IMPORTANT INFORMATION

**Nov 12 / 2025**

Date

**ATIA 20(1)**

Signature of Appellant/Agent

If an Agent is representing the property owner, a letter is required from the owner giving consent to a property inspection.

Registered Owner:

I/We hereby give permission to the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo to do a site inspection and take photographs of the property as necessary for the purpose of this Appeal.

**ATIA 20(1)**

Signature of Registered Owner

**Please return the completed form and prescribed filing fee to:**

Clerk of the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor, Jubilee Center, 9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray AB T9H 2K4  
Telephone: 780-743-7001 Email: sdab@mmwb.ca

**Protection of Privacy**

The personal information you provide on this form is collected under the authority of section 4(c) of the Protection of Privacy Act. It will be used to process your appeal with the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB). Your information will be disclosed in accordance with section 13(1) of the Protection of Privacy Act. If you have any questions regarding the collection or use of this personal information, please contact the Legislative Officer – SDAB, 7th Floor, 9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 2K4, or call 780-788-2222.

**For Office Use Only**

Appeal #:	Fee:	Appeal Hearing Date:	Date Applicant Notified:	Date Appellant Notified:
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<sup>1</sup> Agent – A person who acts for a Property Owner, Applicant, Appellant, and/or Affected/Adjacent Property Owner during the appeal hearing process or at a hearing before the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board.

## Attachment 1

Development Permit Number 2025 DP 00321

Opposition to Proposed Group Home at 105 Highfield St.

As residents of this quiet, residential neighbourhood, many residents have serious concerns regarding safety, supervision, parking and the encroachment of non-residential uses in areas intended for single-family residential living. Below are our specific objections, supported by reference to Land Use Bylaw No. 26/001 and observed issues at the subject property.

Concerns:

1. Lack of Adequate Supervision/Enforcement of Rules
  - a. The sober living home's rules as per the Wood Buffalo Wellness Society website have not been adhered to. On the evening of the 29<sup>th</sup> into the 30<sup>th</sup> of August, there was an incident with two individuals that exited the sober living home and were met by 2 individuals on motorcycles parked on the lawn. The 2 individuals from the home consumed drugs on the front lawn in full view of at least 3 homes and 4 eyewitnesses. Home security camera coverage of this incident is available for review if requested. As per the rules outlined by WBWS, these individuals should have been removed from the sober living home. They were not and continued to reside there. This demonstrates either a lack of non-compliance to WBWS own rules, or a lack of safety/security/supervision which is purported to be in place.
  - b. This raises the risk to both residents and neighbours: potential for noise, trespassing, drug trafficking, altercations or other public safety concerns.
2. Safety Issues
  - a. The group home with 7 individuals, plus all the support staff that are required as outlined in the WBWS website who are required to oversee and support the individuals, creates higher traffic (foot or vehicular), disturbances, increase of danger, and reduces the safety for our children and elderly in the neighbourhood. There are many young families on the street with many small children.
3. Parking Constrains
  - a. The proposed group home does not have sufficient on site parking to accommodate 7 residents plus staff/supervision.
  - b. It is our understanding, under Bylaw 26/001, minimum parking stall requirements must be met unless a variance is granted. In cases of uses with higher than typical traffic or vehicle visits, a parking study may be required.
  - c. Inadequate parking will lead to overflow onto neighbouring streets, causing congestion and safety hazards (eg obstructed sight lines, emergency vehicle access issues)
4. Land Use/Character of the Area

- a. This is a quiet single family residential neighborhood; introduction of a sober living home transforms a dwelling into a quasi-commercial or institutional use with multiple non-related occupants plus staff.
  - b. It may change the character of the street, increase noise, traffic and reduce privacy for residents.
5. Compliance with Bylaw No 26/001
- a. The Land Use Bylaw regulates uses, supervision, parking and development standards. Proposed development must conform to these.
  - b. The proposal fails to satisfy (or there is lack of evidence to show full compliance with) the following:
    - a. Parking stall minimums
    - b. Supervision/care protocols expected in group home settings
    - c. Any impact assessments required by the bylaw (traffic, parking) if the use is greater intensity than typical residential.

We are concerned that Wood Buffalo Wellness Society has taken this long to properly apply for the operations of a group home. Our experience is that this group home has been in operation for at least 1.5 – 2 years. This has not built trust between WBWS and the neighbourhood. The Development Permit states that functional security cameras around the exterior of the house are required to enhance safety and security. If none of the residents pose security or safety concerns to residents, then why would this be necessary. Further, if security cameras and drug testing have been in place, why were residents not removed from the home after the August incident and provided the support that they should have received.

October 21, 2025

**Applicant**

WOOD BUFFALO WELLNESS SOCIETY  
PO Box 5748  
Fort McMurray, AB T9H4V9  
(780) 713-9794

**Owner**

GLENVILLE PROPERTY MANAGEMENT LTD.  
C/O 13516 RAVINE DRIVE, ATTN: RACHEL  
HAMILTON EDMONTON AB T5N3L8  
(780) 242-0888

**RE: Group Home (5-Bedroom Adult Recovery Home).**  
**105 HIGHFIELD STREET**  
**Lot: 19 Block: 42 Plan: 762 0092**

Your application for a development permit at the above location has been approved by the Development Officer. This approval is subject to the conditions as outlined in the enclosed Development Permit.

**PLEASE READ PERMIT CONDITIONS CAREFULLY.**

**This development permit shall expire and no longer be valid after one year from the date of decision of the permit if no construction has been initiated. Any other necessary permits shall be in place prior to commencement of any construction or occupancy. In the case of a change of use within an existing structure, where no significant construction or reconstruction is necessary, the applicant shall have the new use in operation within one year of the decision of the development permit.**

**IMPORTANT NOTE**

1. Under the Municipal Government Amendment Act, this approval may be appealed within twenty one (21) days after the day of decision being posted. Should this decision be appealed within twenty one (21) days after the Date of Decision, this permit shall not become effective until the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board has determined the appeal and the Permit may be modified or nullified thereby. Commencement of the approved Development prior to expiry of the appeal period is at your own risk.
2. An appeal shall contain statement of the grounds of appeal and shall be delivered personally or by registered mail so as to reach the Secretary of the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board, 9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 2K4 within the prescribed time period of twenty one (21) days.
3. Upon delivery of Notice of Appeal, the appellant shall pay to the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, where the appellant is the owner of the site, or his agent, a fee of \$1000.00.



Compliance with other legislation - A person applying for, or in possession of a valid development permit is not relieved from full responsibility for ascertaining and complying with, or carrying out development in accordance with:

- a. the requirements of the Safety Codes Act, Environment Protection and Enhancement Act and Natural Resources Conservation Board Act;
- b. the requirements of any other Federal, Provincial, or Municipal statute, regulation code or standard; and
- c. the conditions of any caveat, covenant, easement or other instrument affecting a building or land.

The Municipality is not responsible for not does the Municipality have any obligation whatsoever to determine what other legislation may apply to a development, nor monitor or enforce compliance with such legislation.

**REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF WOOD BUFFALO**  
**Planning & Development Services**  
per:

**ATIA 20(1)**

October 21, 2025

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos**  
**Planner II**  
**Planning and Development Services**  
**Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo**  
**DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca**

**Date**

**Applicant:** markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com

**Issued :** October 21, 2025

# Development Permit

**105 HIGHFIELD STREET**

Lot	Block	Plan	Section	Township	Range
19	42	762 0092	19	89	9

## Group Home

Group Home (5-Bedroom Adult Recovery Home).

Discretionary Uses – Planning Commission:  
Advertising Date: Thursday, October 23, 2025

- This development was approved by the Development Officer and is subject to the conditions attached to this permit.
- All conditions stated on this development permit must be complied with.
- You have one year from Date of Decision to commence construction. All appropriate building/mechanical permits must be applied for and issued. In the case of a change of use within an existing structure where no significant construction or reconstruction is necessary, the applicant shall have the new use in operation within one year of the decision of the development permit.

**Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo**  
**Planning & Development Services**  
per:

**ATIA 20(1)**

**Issued :** October 21, 2025

**Date**

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos**  
**Planner II**  
**Planning and Development Services**

**Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo**  
**DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca**

**Advisory Notes:**

- 1 Any signage proposed for this development shall require a separate Development Permit application and approval.
- 2 All Federal, Provincial and Municipal statutes and regulations shall be met, including the Alberta Building Code.
- 3 A Utility Installation Permit may be required from the developer and shall be obtained from Engineering Services Division prior to installing underground utilities.
- 4 A Municipal Business License may be required for this development. Please contact the Planning and Development Services front counter staff at [permit.inquiries@rmwb.ca](mailto:permit.inquiries@rmwb.ca) for further information and, if applicable, to obtain an application.
- 5 The Alberta Fire Code applies in and around buildings existing or being constructed on a site. Complete project plans and specifications, construction fire safety plans, and fire related activities requiring Fire Prevention Permits shall be reviewed by the Fire Authority prior to the commencement of any work related thereto. Inquiries and permit applications shall be submitted to the Fire Authority.
- 6 The property has been previously approved for the following Development Permits:
  - 6.1) Single Family Dwelling - October 23, 1975
  - 6.2) Basement Development - 1979-154
  - 6.3) Garage (26' x 24') - July 11, 2005
- 7 **GROUP HOME** means a development using a dwelling unit as a facility which is authorized, licensed or certified by a provincial authority to provide room and board for foster children or for physically, mentally, socially, developmentally or behaviorally challenged persons and which may be for the personal rehabilitation of its residents either through self-help or professional care, guidance and supervision. The residential character of the development shall be maintained with the occupants living together as a single housekeeping group using shared kitchen facilities. A group home may incorporate accommodations for resident staff as an accessory use.

**Conditions:**

- 1 This development is classified as a Group Home (5-Bedroom Adult Recovery Home) and is a Discretionary Use–Planning Commission in the R1 – Single Detached Residential District.
- 2 This Development Permit has been approved on a temporary basis and shall not extend beyond **November 1, 2027**. A new Development Permit application will be required to obtain approval to continue the Group Home use.
- 3 Construction materials, including garbage, shall be stored so as not to create a nuisance to neighbouring properties.
- 4 The building location, design and external finish shall be as indicated on the approved drawings. Any changes to the approved plans shall be submitted to the Development Officer for further approval, even if said changes are minor in nature and are consistent with the regulations applied to the site.
- 5 A minimum of five (5) on-site parking stalls shall be provided for this development. The required parking stalls shall be accessible from a public thoroughfare, and be surfaced with gravel, asphalt, concrete or a similar material.
- 6 A minimum of thirty percent (30%) of the gross lot area shall consist of soft landscaping.
- 7 The Group Home shall maintain its residential character and remain in a good state of repair, including proper upkeep and cleanliness.
- 8 The garbage and waste material shall be stored in weather-proof and animal-proof containers and shall be visually screened in a manner compatible with the design and external materials of the Single Detached Dwelling on the property.
- 9 The Accessory Building (Garage) shall not be used as a dwelling unit.
- 10 The Group Home shall be equipped with functional security cameras around the exterior of the Single Detached Dwelling to enhance safety and security.
- 11 All on site lighting shall be located, oriented and shielded so as to restrict the unnecessary illumination of adjacent residential properties.
- 12 There shall be no unauthorized use of any adjoining Public Utility Lot (Lot: 18U, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092) during the course of the approved development permit.
- 13 All required Safety Code permits under the Safety Code Act in the: building, mechanical, electrical, gas, plumbing and private sewage disciplines must be obtained for this development. Please contact the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo - Planning and Development Branch to obtain the required Safety Code permits or for information regarding these permits 780-799-8695.
- 14 The Group Home must obtain authorization, licensing, or certification from a provincial authority to operate. They must adhere strictly to all pertinent Statutes and Regulations established by the Government of Alberta within six (6) months of the issuance of this Development Permit.





Wood Buffalo Wellness Society  
PO Box 5748  
Fort McMurray, Alberta  
T9H 4V9

Phone (780) 334 – 2398  
Fax (780) 334 – 2352  
www.woodbuffalowellnessociety.com

July 31, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

I/We, the undersigned, am/are the registered owner(s) of the property located at 105 Highfield Street.

I/We hereby authorize Wood Buffalo Wellness Society, to act on my/our behalf in submitting a Development Permit (DP) application for a Group Home at this property. This includes providing all required documentation, including the building plans.

This authorization is given voluntarily, and the information above is accurate to the best of my/our knowledge.

Sincerely,

Glenville Property Management Ltd.

**ATIA 20(1)**

Authorized Signatory, Tyler Hamilton

Date: August 4, 2025

**ATIA 20(1)**

ATIA 20(1)

# LAND SURVEYOR'S REAL PROPERTY REPORT

TO:

105 HIGHFIELD STREET  
Fort McMurray, Alberta  
(the "Client")

Re: LOT 19, BLOCK 42, PLAN 762 0092  
105 HIGHFIELD STREET  
Fort McMurray, Alberta  
(the "Property")

Date of Survey : August 27, 1992 - May 4th, 2007

Date of title search: May 10th, 2007 Title No: 042 006 470

## CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this Report, which includes the adjacent Plan and related Survey, was prepared and performed under my personal supervision and in accordance with the Manual of Standard Practice of the Alberta Land Surveyors' Association and Supplements thereto. Accordingly, within those standards and as of the date of this Report, I am of the opinion that:

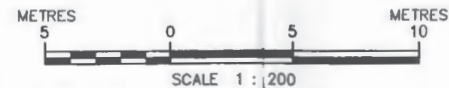
1. the Plan illustrates the boundaries of the Property, the permanent visible improvements situated thereon (the "Improvements"), registered easements, rights-of-way, and other registered instruments affecting the extent of the title to the Property,
2. the Improvements are entirely within the boundaries of the Property.
3. no visible encroachments exist on the Property from any improvements situated on an adjoining property.
4. no visible encroachments exist on registered easements, rights-of-way or other registered instruments affecting the extent of property.
5. all fences are within 0.20 metres of the property line unless otherwise noted.

Purpose: This Report and the Related Plan and Survey have been prepared and performed only for the benefit of the Client, the Client's purchaser (if this was prepared to facilitate a sale) and any of their legal advisors and lenders/mortgagees. Copying is NOT permitted. Where applicable, registered easements, utility rights-of-way, and other registered instruments affecting the extent of the property have been shown on the adjacent Plan. Unless otherwise shown, property corner markers have not been placed during the survey for this Report.

The Plan should not be used to establish property boundaries due to the high degree of risk of the user making an error in measurement.

Dated at Edmonton, Alberta  
May 17th, 2007

Rod Buchko, A.L.S.

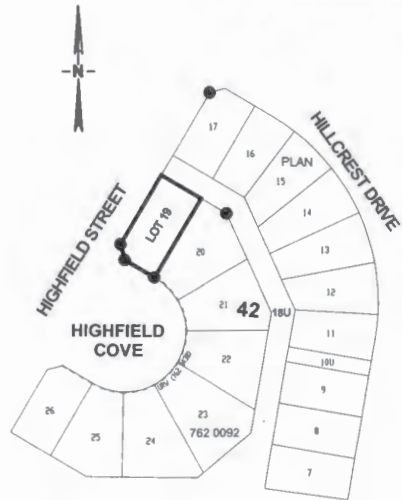
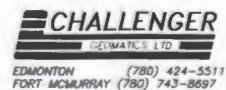


Property is subject to:

'SEE ATTACHED TITLE'

©CHALLENGER GEOMATICS LTD. 2007

DWN BY: RJ FILE: 26929-RPR  
CHK. BY: TT/RB DATE: May 17th, 2007



## LOCATION PLAN

SCALE: 1:2000

## RPR UPDATE

UPDATE OF JOB 92-S-4022

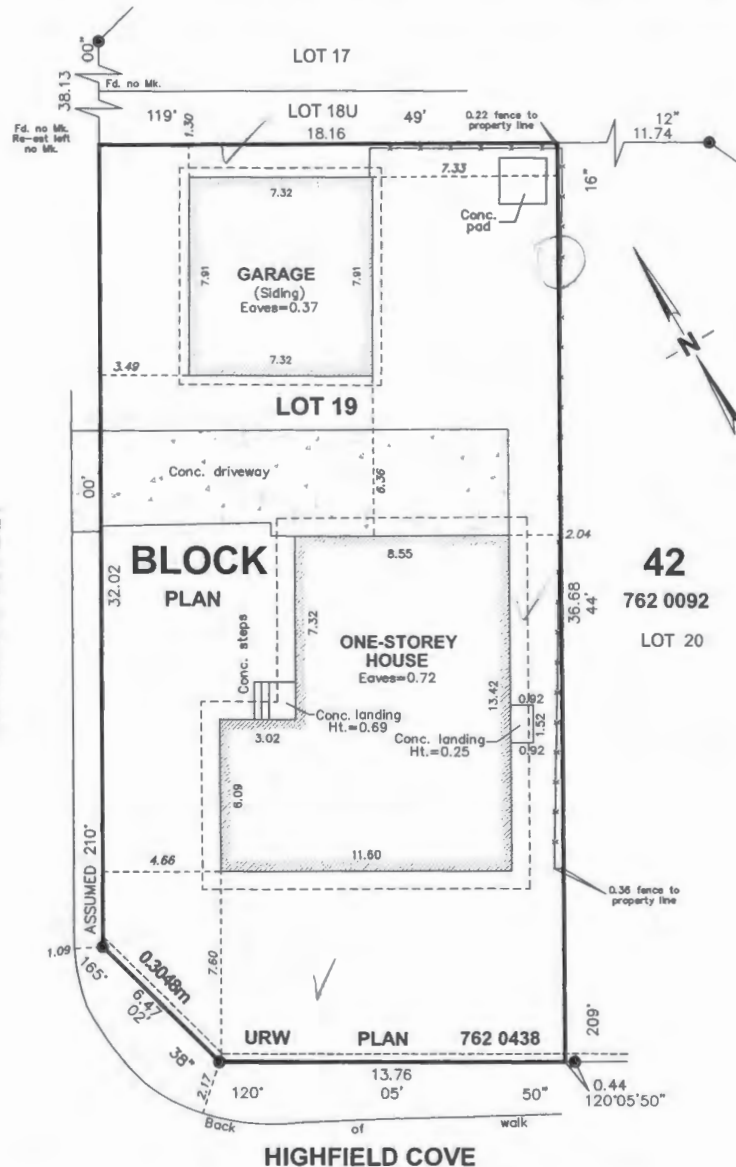
## LEGEND & NOTES

Dimensions shown are in metres and decimals thereof.  
Dimensions and side yard distances refer to foundation of building and are perpendicular to the property lines unless shown otherwise, and are shown thus: 4.88  
Statutory iron post found shown thus:

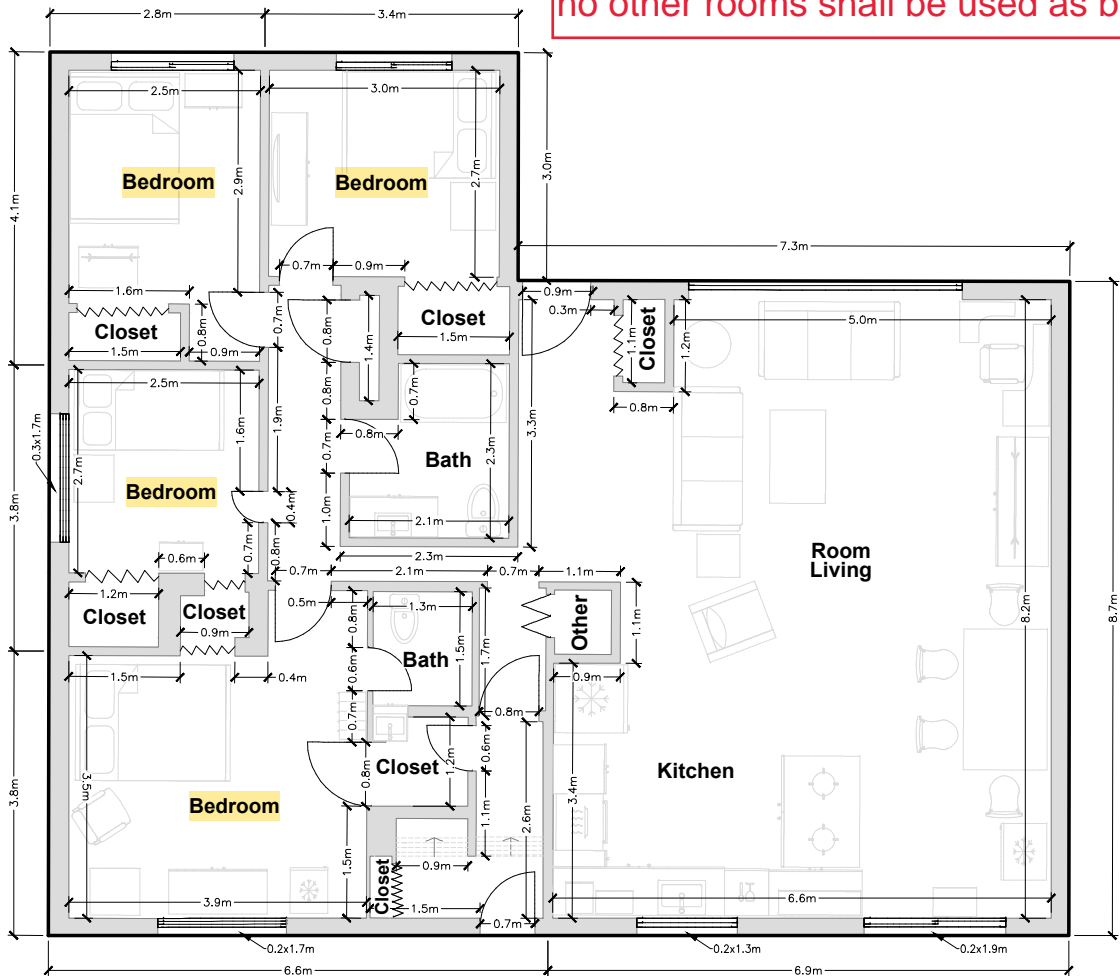
Fence X  
A.L.S. Alberta Land Surveyor  
Conc. Concrete  
Fd. Found  
Ht. Height  
Mk. Mark  
m. metres  
U Public utility  
Re-est. Re-established  
URW Utility Right of Way

2

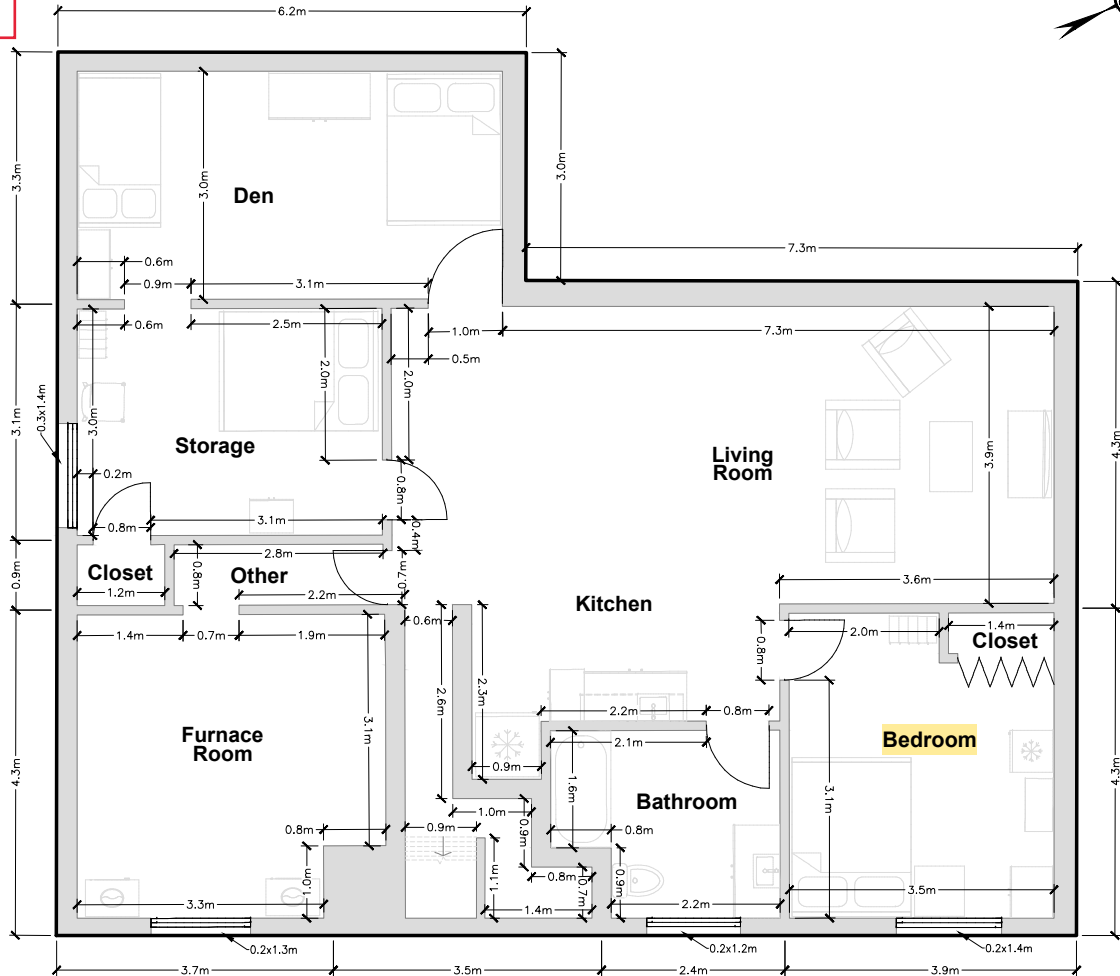
HIGHFIELD STREET



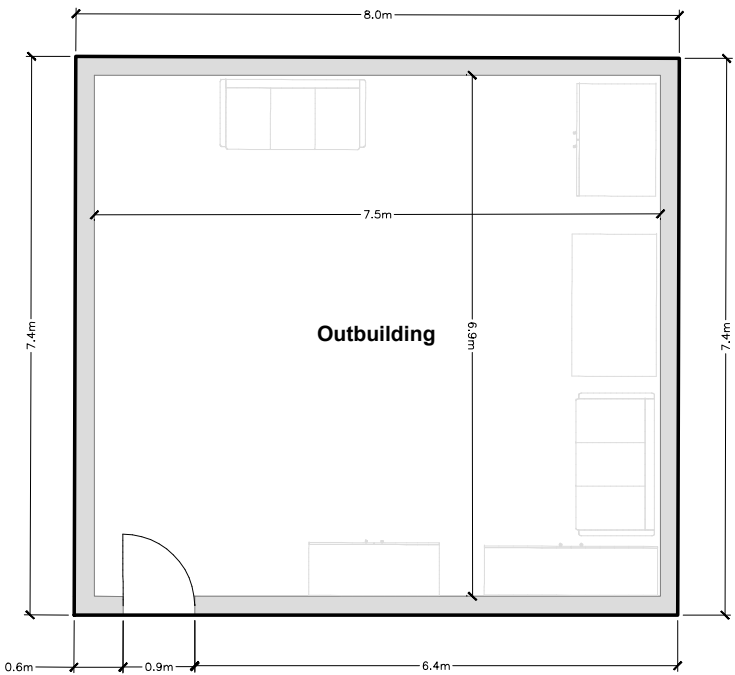
This approval is for five (5) bedrooms and no other rooms shall be used as bedrooms.



GROUND FLOOR



BASEMENT



GARAGE

ATIA 20(1)

3



CLIENT:

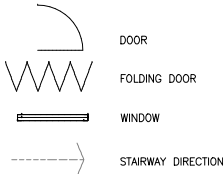


NOTES:

1. ALL DIMENSIONS AND DISTANCES ARE IN METERS UNLESS SHOWN OTHERWISE.

THE INFORMATION CONTAINED ON THIS DRAWING, AND ANY DOCUMENTATION PERTAINING TO THIS DRAWING IS CURRENT AS OF 23-JUL-2025. ANY FACILITIES UNDER OR ABOVE GROUND INSTALLED AFTER THE AFORE MENTIONED DATE MAY NOT HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS DOCUMENT, OR ITS SUPPORT DOCUMENTS.

LEGEND:



Civic Address: 105 HIGHFIELD STREET  
Legal Address: LOT 19, BLOCK 42, PLAN 762 0092  
CLIENT: WOOD BUFFALO WELLNESS SOCIETY

SITE MAP:



REVISIONS

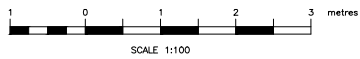
NO.	DESCRIPTION	DATE
0	PLAN ISSUED	11-Aug-25



DRAWING TITLE:

105 HIGHFIELD ST.  
FLOOR PLAN AS-BUILT

SCALE:



DRAWN BY: KD	SURVEYED BY: BG	REV: 0
DWG NO: LND12358-003-AB_0	FWP NO: 1	Page 13
DATE: 11-AUG-2025	SHEET: 1 OF 1	



Thank you for your email and for taking the time to share your questions about the Recovery home at 105 Highfield Street.

The Sakihitowin Recovery Home at this address is intended to provide safe and supportive housing for up to seven adult males who are in recovery from substance use. To help answer your questions:

### **Resident background**

- All residents must be sober when they move in.
- The majority come directly from treatment centres, where they have completed intensive recovery programming.
- Residents are not accepted if they pose a risk to the safety of others. Individuals with convictions related to sexual assault, or anything related to children are **not eligible** for this program.

### **Expectations and support**

- Residents are required to attend regular AA/NA meetings, participate in random drug testing (usually twice a week), and follow an 11:00 p.m. curfew.



## **Expectations and support**

- Residents are required to attend regular AA/NA meetings, participate in random drug testing (usually twice a week), and follow an 11:00 p.m. curfew.
- Each resident works on personal recovery goals, including employment readiness and family reunification.
- Staff check in daily, provide counselling, and ensure the home remains a safe, stable environment.

## **Purpose of the home**

- The home is designed to support people who are committed to their recovery journey.
- It provides up to two years of stable housing where residents can live with peers who are also in recovery, holding each other accountable, building community, and celebrating successes together.

Our goal is to ensure the home not only supports residents but is also a positive part of the neighbourhood. We value open communication with community members, are committed to being good neighbors and are happy to connect further

#### Description:

Recovery Home (sober home), The program is semi structured with a combination of required participation and exercising autonomy and independence. Residents are exposed to traditional recovery paths like mental health counselling and participation in peer support groups as well as provided opportunities for employment & training, education, volunteering, and leisure activities. 90% of the residents we work with are parents. In cases of family system disruption, we work with all parties to facilitate thoughtful family reunification plans. We work with many partner agencies to provide wraparound support with a multi-disciplinary approach to addiction and mental health recovery.

From: ATIA 20(1)  
To: [Subdivision and Development Appeal Board](#)  
Cc: ATIA 20(1)  
Subject: Notice of Appeal SDAB 2025-008  
Date: Saturday, January 17, 2026 9:40:48 AM

---

**External Message - Please be cautious when opening links or attachments in email**

Please accept this email as notice of my intention to present at the hearing scheduled for Jan 26, 2026.

A summary of my testimony is as follows:

1. History of illegal drug activity, violence and weapons at 105 Highfield St. and surrounding houses.
2. History of complaints of illegal activity and landlord negligence to be in compliance with bylaws at 105 Highfield St. to both RCMP and Bylaw Services.
3. Safety issues.
4. Parking constraints and compliance with bylaws.
5. Land use/character of area.
6. WBWS operating the sober living home at 105 Highfield St. for approx. 2 years before applying for appropriate permit and lack of engagement with community members during this time period.
7. Drug activity at 105 Highfield St. and lack of enforcement of the rules of the home by WBWS

Thank you.

Lisa Stewart

*Lisa Stewart*

ATIA 20(1)





# SUMMARY OF TESTIMONIAL EVIDENCE

## Wood Buffalo Wellness Society

Appeal Hearing: SDAB-2025-008  
Development Permit Number: 2025 DP 00321

### Purpose of This Summary

We, the Wood Buffalo Wellness Society, submit that the appeal should be dismissed, as it is not grounded in sound planning principles, relies on speculative concerns rather than objective evidence, and reflects stigma and discriminatory assumptions that are not appropriate considerations under the Municipal Government Act (MGA) or RMWB Land Use Bylaw No. 26/001.

### Summary of Testimonial Evidence

1. The approved development is a sober living home/group home that is consistent with the RMWB Land Use Bylaw as a residential use and not a quasi-commercial or commercial use.
2. The sober living home operates as a single household and within a structured living environment and its residents are subject to:
  - Intake screening
  - Behavioural expectations
  - Sobriety and conduct requirements
  - Daily supervision with staff oversight
3. The program operates in compliance with:
  - Applicable laws and bylaws
  - Privacy legislation
  - Human rights obligations
4. Supervision and support are provided through established operational protocols and policy that is designed to ensure:
  - Resident accountability
  - Neighbourhood safety
  - Timely response to concerns
5. All appropriate protocols and policies were followed and adhered to in response to the complaint described in Concern #1 of the appeal.
6. The Development Authority's requirement for exterior security cameras is a preventative and standard condition, not an indication of elevated risk.
7. There is no evidence to support the claim by the appellant that the presence of a sober living home will change the character of the street, increase noise, traffic and reduce privacy for residents.



## **Planning Relevance:**

1. The use aligns with the definition and intent of a Group Home under Land Use Bylaw No. 26/001.
2. There is no evidence that the group home creates the negative impacts claimed by the appellant and or that a group home creates impacts materially different from other residential uses.
3. The Development Authority exercised reasonable and appropriate discretion in approving the permit.

## **Summary of Documentary Evidence**

### **Municipal and Regulatory Documents**

1. Approved Development Permit No. 2025 DP 00321
2. Land Use Bylaw No. 26/001 Definitions that confirm that:
  - Group Homes are a recognized Residential Use
3. Ontario Human Rights Commission Study “Systemic and Societal Human Rights Issues in Housing” – Section 5.5 – Discriminatory NIMBY Opposition to Affordable Housing.
4. Ontario Human Rights Commission “Neighbourhood Housing Tip Sheet – Fact Sheet”
5. Wellesly Institute Study – “We are Neighbours – The impact of Supportive Housing on Community, Social, Economic and Attitude Changes”

### **Operational and Compliance Documentation**

- Sakihitowin Recovery Living Program House Rules and Resident Agreement that is signed by participants prior to joining the program.
- Text messages that demonstrate the intent to address concerns through attempts to connect with the neighbours with respect to the alleged incident on August 29/30, 2025.
- Comprehensive Breakdown of the 14 Panel Urinalysis Test that includes in detail descriptions of the substances and the time frames for which traces can appear in testing.
- Internal Data showing the urinalysis testing performed for the time period surrounding the alleged incident showing no positives were found for the dates of the alleged incident.

## **Human Rights and Planning Context**

- Alberta Human Rights Commission Guidance  
Confirms that:
  - Supportive and group housing are protected residential forms
  - Planning decisions cannot be based on stigma associated with addiction, disability, or perceived risk
  - Exclusion of such housing from residential neighbourhoods constitutes a human rights concern

Charter values under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms further support principles of equality, dignity, and freedom from discrimination, which must inform all governmental decision-making, including land-use regulation and appeal decisions.

## **Response to Appellants Concerns**

### **Safety and Supervision**

The appeal raises generalized fears rather than documented planning impacts. No enforcement records or substantiated safety incidents have been presented that would justify overturning the Development Authority's decision.

- Staff are on-site everyday, residents must sign agreements that cover behaviours, curfews, sobriety, visitors, noise and proper conduct.
- Violation of any of these aspects of the agreement have immediate consequences, including potential termination from the program.
- Residents are carefully screened and must be in active recovery.
- The residents do regular urinalysis testing that is tracked and well documented.
- Compared to a standard residential household, supervision is much higher and far more controlled.

With respect to the alleged incident described by the appellant:

- Attempts to obtain details, clarification and address the concern directly with neighbours were refused;
- All operational protocols were followed, including the review of our camera footage and repeat urinalysis testing.
- Completed urinalysis testing came back negative for all residents of the home.

### **Parking and Traffic**

The approved development meets parking requirements under Land Use Bylaw No. 26/001.

The appeal does not provide objective evidence of parking shortages, congestion, or safety issues.

The Development Authority has already restricted the occupancy of the household on the basis of available parking stalls on the property, which puts the number of residents in the household below the available bedrooms and regular residential use capacity.

Residents walking to and from stores, bus stops or jobs, is consistent with normal, healthy residential life. There is no evidence that this creates congestion or safety hazards beyond typical neighbourhood use.

## **Neighbourhood Character**

The presence of unrelated individuals in a dwelling does not alter the residential character of the neighbourhood.

Neighbourhood character is defined by land use, built form, and measurable impacts, not by the personal characteristics, health status, or disabilities of occupants.

## **Discrimination, Human Rights and NIMBY Considerations**

The appeal reflects concerns tied to the perceived characteristics of residents rather than land-use impacts in that it:

- Put emphasis on perceived risks associated with residents rather than evidence of land-use impacts
- Heightens scrutiny of a lawful residential use that would not be applied to a conventional household
- Relies on speculative safety, noise and supervision concerns unsupported by enforcement or planning data

Planning law and human rights principles require that:

- Residential uses are not excluded based on stigma;
- Decisions do not reinforce discrimination against protected groups; and
- Housing in residential neighbourhoods be evaluated based on form and impact, not fear or perception.

## **Conclusion**

This appeal reflects concerns that extend beyond legitimate planning considerations and enter into the realm of discriminatory and NIMBY (not in my back yard) based opposition, which is essentially a human rights issue, not a planning issue.

Addiction is considered a disability within Alberta law and is a protected ground under human rights legislation. Land-use decisions that restrict or exclude such housing based on public opposition, fear, or stigma, rather than on objective, demonstrable planning impacts, result in discriminatory outcomes regardless of intent.

Importantly, the impacts cited in the appeal are not unique to group homes and may arise from any residential use. The appeal seeks to impose a higher standard solely because the residents are individuals in recovery, which reflects differential treatment (discrimination) rooted in stigma rather than planning analysis.

Planning law requires that decisions be evidence-based, treat comparable residential uses consistently and prevent neighbourhood opposition from excluding lawful housing forms.

Allowing the appeal would risk legitimizing NIMBY driven opposition and would set a precedent whereby residential uses serving vulnerable populations could be displaced by public resistance rather than assessed on their actual planning impacts.

## **Outcome Requested**

Based on the testimonial and documentary evidence, The Wood Buffalo Wellness Society respectfully submits that the SDAB should:

- Dismiss the appeal
- Uphold the approval of Development Permit No. 2025 DP 00321

**6.21. HR1 – Hamlet Residential 1 District****6.21.1. Purpose**

The purpose of this district is to maintain the existing character of established residential areas and provide for low density residential development.

6.21.2. <u>Permitted uses</u>	6.21.3. <u>Discretionary uses</u>
(a) <u>Accessory building</u> (b) <u>Garage sale</u> (c) <u>Home business, minor</u> (d) <u>Mobile home</u> (e) <u>Park</u> (f) <u>Public utility</u> (g) <u>Single detached dwelling</u>	(a) <u>Bed and breakfast</u> (b) <u>Boarding house*</u> (c) <u>Child care facility</u> (d) <u>Duplex</u> (e) <u>Essential public service</u> (f) <u>Group home*</u> (g) <u>Home business, major</u> (h) <u>Secondary suite</u> (i) <u>Semi-detached dwelling</u>
*Notice Posting	

**6.21.4. Site Standards**

The following standards shall apply to every development in this district.

Site Standard	Municipal Serviced <u>Lots</u>	<u>Lots</u> serviced with Municipal Water or Municipal Sewer	Unserviced <u>Lots</u>
(a) <u>Lot</u> area (minimum)	600.0sq m	2,023.0sq m	4,047.0sq m
(b) <u>Lot width</u> (minimum)	15.0m	20.0m	30.0m
(c) <u>Front yard setback</u> (minimum)	7.5m		
(d) <u>Rear yard setback</u>	6.0m	7.5m	7.5m
(e) <u>Interior side yard setbacks</u> (minimum)	One <u>interior side yard</u> 1.5m and at least one <u>interior side yard</u> 3.0m	4.5m	7.5m
(f) <u>Exterior side yard setback</u> (minimum)	3.0m	4.5m	7.5m
(g) <u>Height</u> (maximum)	10.0m		
(h) <u>Lot coverage</u> (maximum)	45% up to maximum of 600.0sq m	30% or 600.0sq m, whichever is lesser	1,000.0sq m
(i) <u>Landscaping</u> (minimum)	30% soft <u>landscaping</u>		

**6.21.5. Additional Provisions**

- (a) A mobile home shall be completely screened from view by the foundation, skirting, or by such other means satisfactory to the Development Authority.
- (b) All accessory buildings, additions, porches, and skirting shall be of a quality and appearance equivalent to the mobile home.

October 21, 2025

**Applicant**

WOOD BUFFALO WELLNESS SOCIETY  
PO Box 5748  
Fort McMurray, AB T9H4V9  
(780) 713-9794

**Owner**

GLENVILLE PROPERTY MANAGEMENT LTD.  
C/O 13516 RAVINE DRIVE, ATTN: RACHEL  
HAMILTON EDMONTON AB T5N3L8  
(780) 242-0888

**RE: Group Home (5-Bedroom Adult Recovery Home).**

**105 HIGHFIELD STREET**

**Lot: 19 Block: 42 Plan: 762 0092**

Your application for a development permit at the above location has been approved by the Development Officer. This approval is subject to the conditions as outlined in the enclosed Development Permit.

**PLEASE READ PERMIT CONDITIONS CAREFULLY.**

**This development permit shall expire and no longer be valid after one year from the date of decision of the permit if no construction has been initiated. Any other necessary permits shall be in place prior to commencement of any construction or occupancy. In the case of a change of use within an existing structure, where no significant construction or reconstruction is necessary, the applicant shall have the new use in operation within one year of the decision of the development permit.**

**IMPORTANT NOTE**

1. Under the Municipal Government Amendment Act, this approval may be appealed within twenty one (21) days after the day of decision being posted. Should this decision be appealed within twenty one (21) days after the Date of Decision, this permit shall not become effective until the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board has determined the appeal and the Permit may be modified or nullified thereby. Commencement of the approved Development prior to expiry of the appeal period is at your own risk.
2. An appeal shall contain statement of the grounds of appeal and shall be delivered personally or by registered mail so as to reach the Secretary of the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board, 9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 2K4 within the prescribed time period of twenty one (21) days.
3. Upon delivery of Notice of Appeal, the appellant shall pay to the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, where the appellant is the owner of the site, or his agent, a fee of \$1000.00.



Compliance with other legislation - A person applying for, or in possession of a valid development permit is not relieved from full responsibility for ascertaining and complying with, or carrying out development in accordance with:

- a. the requirements of the Safety Codes Act, Environment Protection and Enhancement Act and Natural Resources Conservation Board Act;
- b. the requirements of any other Federal, Provincial, or Municipal statute, regulation code or standard; and
- c. the conditions of any caveat, covenant, easement or other instrument affecting a building or land.

The Municipality is not responsible for not does the Municipality have any obligation whatsoever to determine what other legislation may apply to a development, nor monitor or enforce compliance with such legislation.

**REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF WOOD BUFFALO**  
**Planning & Development Services**  
per:

**ATIA 20(1)**

October 21, 2025

**Date**

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos**  
**Planner II**  
**Planning and Development Services**  
**Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo**  
**DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca**

**Applicant:** markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com

**Issued :** October 21, 2025

## Development Permit

**105 HIGHFIELD STREET**

Lot	Block	Plan	Section	Township	Range
19	42	762 0092	19	89	9

### Group Home

Group Home (5-Bedroom Adult Recovery Home).

Discretionary Uses – Planning Commission:  
**Advertising Date: Thursday, October 23, 2025**

- This development was approved by the Development Officer and is subject to the conditions attached to this permit.
- All conditions stated on this development permit must be complied with.
- You have one year from Date of Decision to commence construction. All appropriate building/mechanical permits must be applied for and issued. In the case of a change of use within an existing structure where no significant construction or reconstruction is necessary, the applicant shall have the new use in operation within one year of the decision of the development permit.

**Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo**  
**Planning & Development Services**  
per:

**ATIA 20(1)**

**Issued :** October 21, 2025

**Date**

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos**  
**Planner II**  
**Planning and Development Services**

**Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo**  
**DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca**

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**Advisory Notes:**

- 1 Any signage proposed for this development shall require a separate Development Permit application and approval.
- 2 All Federal, Provincial and Municipal statutes and regulations shall be met, including the Alberta Building Code.
- 3 A Utility Installation Permit may be required from the developer and shall be obtained from Engineering Services Division prior to installing underground utilities.
- 4 A Municipal Business License may be required for this development. Please contact the Planning and Development Services front counter staff at [permit.inquiries@rmwb.ca](mailto:permit.inquiries@rmwb.ca) for further information and, if applicable, to obtain an application.
- 5 The Alberta Fire Code applies in and around buildings existing or being constructed on a site. Complete project plans and specifications, construction fire safety plans, and fire related activities requiring Fire Prevention Permits shall be reviewed by the Fire Authority prior to the commencement of any work related thereto. Inquiries and permit applications shall be submitted to the Fire Authority.
- 6 The property has been previously approved for the following Development Permits:
  - 6.1) Single Family Dwelling - October 23, 1975
  - 6.2) Basement Development - 1979-154
  - 6.3) Garage (26' x 24') - July 11, 2005
- 7 **GROUP HOME** means a development using a dwelling unit as a facility which is authorized, licensed or certified by a provincial authority to provide room and board for foster children or for physically, mentally, socially, developmentally or behaviorally challenged persons and which may be for the personal rehabilitation of its residents either through self-help or professional care, guidance and supervision. The residential character of the development shall be maintained with the occupants living together as a single housekeeping group using shared kitchen facilities. A group home may incorporate accommodations for resident staff as an accessory use.

---

**Conditions:**

- 1 This development is classified as a Group Home (5-Bedroom Adult Recovery Home) and is a Discretionary Use–Planning Commission in the R1 – Single Detached Residential District.
- 2 This Development Permit has been approved on a temporary basis and shall not extend beyond **November 1, 2027**. A new Development Permit application will be required to obtain approval to continue the Group Home use.
- 3 Construction materials, including garbage, shall be stored so as not to create a nuisance to neighbouring properties.
- 4 The building location, design and external finish shall be as indicated on the approved drawings. Any changes to the approved plans shall be submitted to the Development Officer for further approval, even if said changes are minor in nature and are consistent with the regulations applied to the site.
- 5 A minimum of five (5) on-site parking stalls shall be provided for this development. The required parking stalls shall be accessible from a public thoroughfare, and be surfaced with gravel, asphalt, concrete or a similar material.
- 6 A minimum of thirty percent (30%) of the gross lot area shall consist of soft landscaping.
- 7 The Group Home shall maintain its residential character and remain in a good state of repair, including proper upkeep and cleanliness.
- 8 The garbage and waste material shall be stored in weather-proof and animal-proof containers and shall be visually screened in a manner compatible with the design and external materials of the Single Detached Dwelling on the property.
- 9 The Accessory Building (Garage) shall not be used as a dwelling unit.
- 10 The Group Home shall be equipped with functional security cameras around the exterior of the Single Detached Dwelling to enhance safety and security.
- 11 All on site lighting shall be located, oriented and shielded so as to restrict the unnecessary illumination of adjacent residential properties.
- 12 There shall be no unauthorized use of any adjoining Public Utility Lot (Lot: 18U, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092) during the course of the approved development permit.
- 13 All required Safety Code permits under the Safety Code Act in the: building, mechanical, electrical, gas, plumbing and private sewage disciplines must be obtained for this development. Please contact the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo - Planning and Development Branch to obtain the required Safety Code permits or for information regarding these permits 780-799-8695.
- 14 The Group Home must obtain authorization, licensing, or certification from a provincial authority to operate. They must adhere strictly to all pertinent Statutes and Regulations established by the Government of Alberta within six (6) months of the issuance of this Development Permit.



Wood Buffalo Wellness Society  
PO Box 5748  
Fort McMurray, Alberta  
T9H 4V9

Phone (780) 334 – 2398  
Fax (780) 334 – 2352  
www.woodbuffalowellnessociety.com

July 31, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

I/We, the undersigned, am/are the registered owner(s) of the property located at 105 Highfield Street.

I/We hereby authorize Wood Buffalo Wellness Society, to act on my/our behalf in submitting a Development Permit (DP) application for a Group Home at this property. This includes providing all required documentation, including the building plans.

This authorization is given voluntarily, and the information above is accurate to the best of my/our knowledge.

Sincerely,

Glenville Property Management Ltd.

**ATIA 20(1)**

Authorized Signatory, Tyler Hamilton

Date: August 4, 2025

**ATIA 20(1)**



ATIA 20(1)

# LAND SURVEYOR'S REAL PROPERTY REPORT

TO:

105 HIGHFIELD STREET  
Fort McMurray, Alberta  
(the "Client")

Re: LOT 19, BLOCK 42, PLAN 762 0092

105 HIGHFIELD STREET  
Fort McMurray, Alberta  
(the "Property")

Date of Survey: August 27, 1992 - May 4th, 2007

Date of title search: May 10th, 2007 Title No: 042 006 470

## CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this Report, which includes the adjacent Plan and related Survey, was prepared and performed under my personal supervision and in accordance with the Manual of Standard Practice of the Alberta Land Surveyors' Association and Supplements thereto. Accordingly, within these standards and as of the date of this Report, I am of the opinion that:

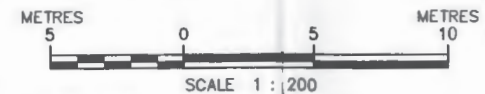
- the Plan illustrates the boundaries of the Property, the permanent visible improvements situated thereon (the "Improvements"), registered easements, rights-of-way, and other registered instruments affecting the extent of the title to the Property,
- the Improvements are entirely within the boundaries of the Property.
- no visible encroachments exist on the Property from any improvements situated on an adjoining property.
- no visible encroachments exist on registered easements, rights-of-way or other registered instruments affecting the extent of property.
- all fences are within 0.20 metres of the property line unless otherwise noted.

Purpose: This Report and the Related Plan and Survey have been prepared and performed only for the benefit of the Client, the Client's purchaser (if this was prepared to facilitate a sale) and any of their legal advisors and lenders/mortgagees. Copying is NOT permitted. Where applicable, registered easements, utility rights-of-way, and other registered instruments affecting the extent of the property have been shown on the adjacent Plan. Unless otherwise shown, property corner markers have not been placed during the survey for this Report.

The Plan should not be used to establish property boundaries due to the high degree of risk of the user making an error in measurement.

Dated at Edmonton, Alberta  
May 17th, 2007

Rod Buchko, A.L.S.

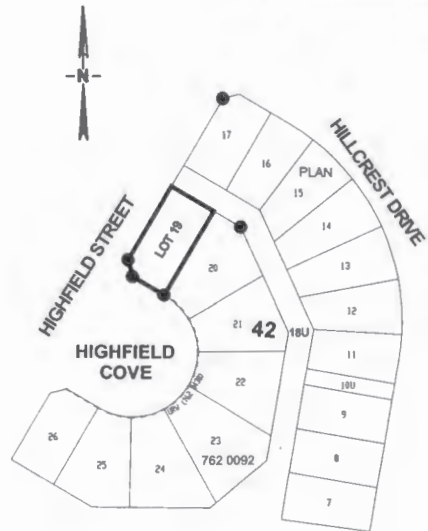
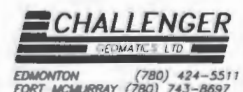


Property is subject to:

'SEE ATTACHED TITLE'

©CHALLENGER GEOMATICS LTD. 2007

DWN BY: RJ FILE: 28829-RPR  
CHK BY: TT/RB DATE: May 17th, 2007



## LOCATION PLAN

SCALE: 1:2000

## RPR UPDATE

UPDATE OF JOB 92-S-4022

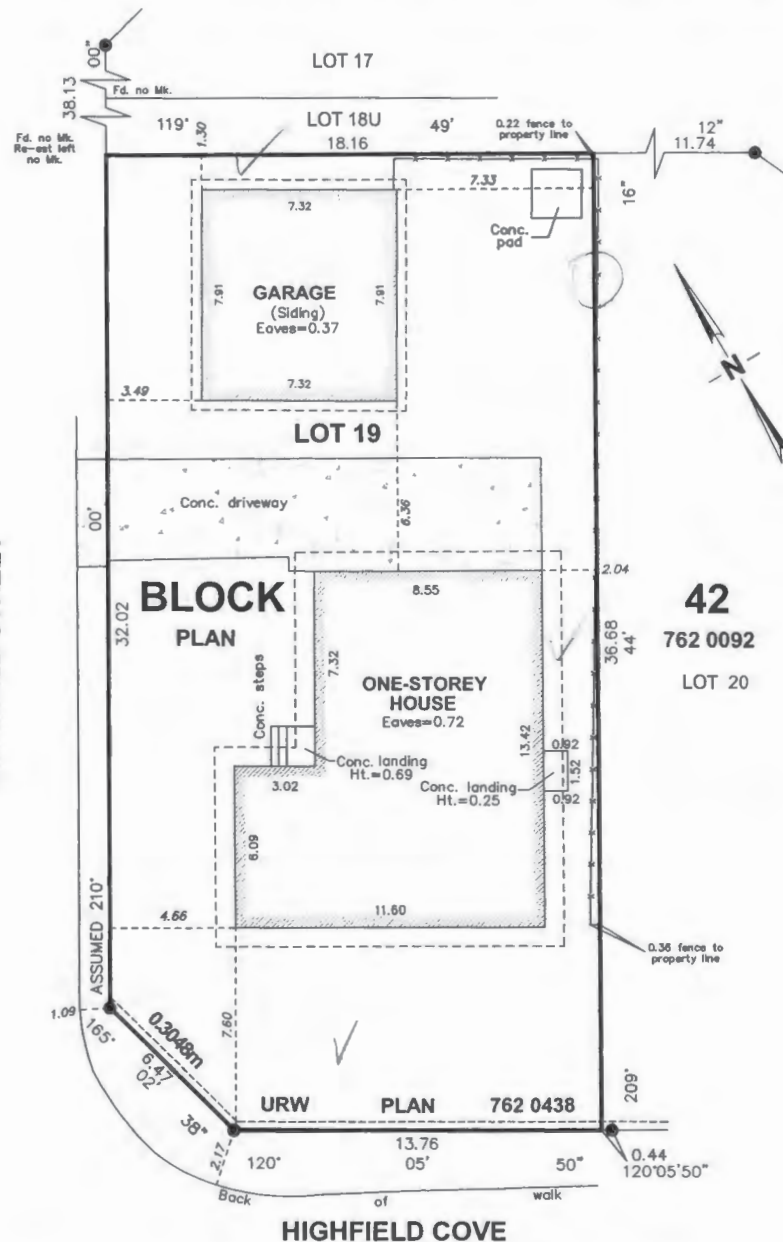
## LEGEND & NOTES

Dimensions shown are in metres and decimals thereof.  
Dimensions and side yard distances refer to foundation of building and are perpendicular to the property lines unless shown otherwise, and are shown thus: 4.66  
Statutory iron post found shown thus: ●

Fence: ———— X ————  
A.L.S.: ———— Alberta Land Surveyor  
Conc.: ———— Concrete  
Fd.: ———— Found  
Ht.: ———— Height  
Mk.: ———— Mark  
m: ———— metres  
U: ———— Public utility  
Re-est.: ———— Re-established  
URW: ———— Utility Right of Way

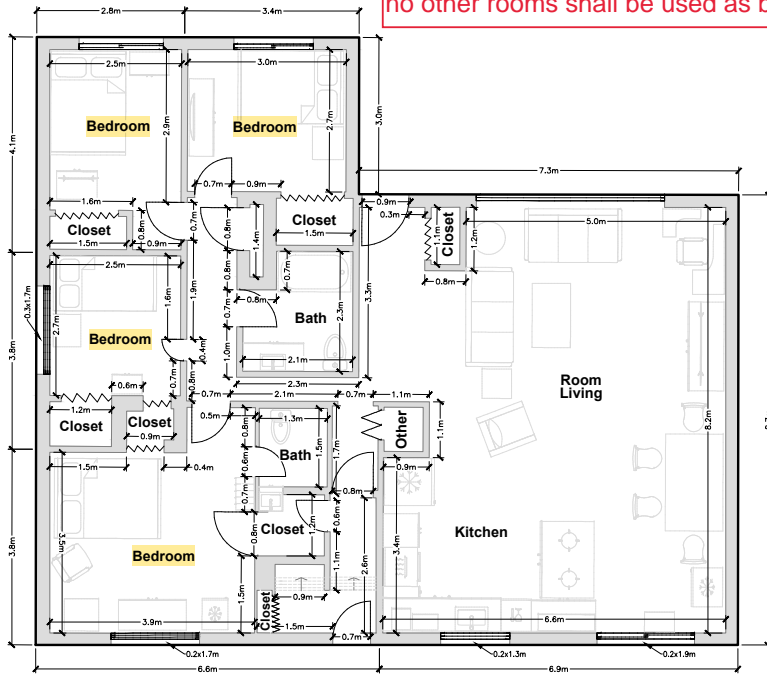
2

HIGHFIELD STREET

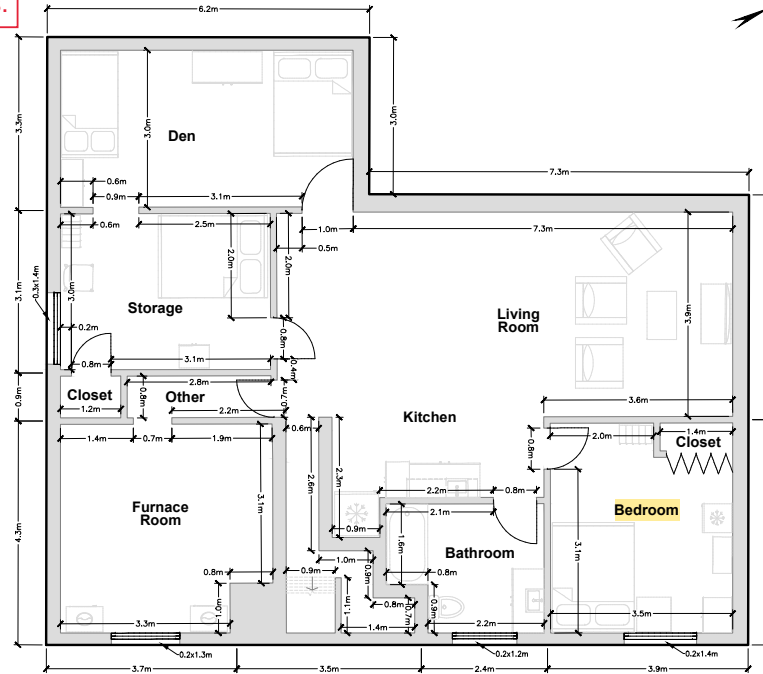




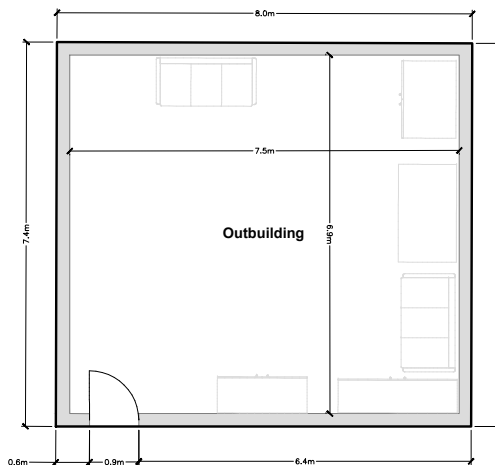
This approval is for five (5) bedrooms and no other rooms shall be used as bedrooms.



GROUND FLOOR



BASEMENT



GARAGE

ATIA 20(1)

3



CLIENT:

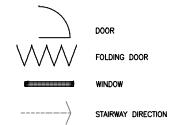


NOTES:

1. ALL DIMENSIONS AND DISTANCES ARE IN METERS UNLESS SHOWN OTHERWISE.

THE INFORMATION CONTAINED ON THIS DRAWING, AND ANY DOCUMENTATION PERTAINING TO THIS DRAWING IS CURRENT AS OF 23-JUL-2025. ANY FACILITIES UNDER OR ABOVE GROUND INSTALLED AFTER THE AFORE MENTIONED DATE MAY NOT HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS DOCUMENT, OR ITS SUPPORT DOCUMENTS.

LEGEND:



CIVIC ADDRESS: 105 HIGHFIELD STREET  
LEGAL ADDRESS: LOT 19, BLOCK 42, PLAN 762 0092  
CLIENT: WOOD BUFFALO WELLNESS SOCIETY

SITE MAP:



REVISIONS

NO.	DESCRIPTION	DATE
0	PLAN ISSUED	11-Aug-25



DRAWING TITLE:

105 HIGHFIELD ST.  
FLOOR PLAN AS-BUILT

SCALE:



DRAWN BY: KD	SURVEYED BY: BG	REV: 0
EWG NO: LN012358-003-AB_0	EWG NO:	
DATE: 11-AUG-2025	SHEET: 1 OF 1	

Thank you for your email and for taking the time to share your questions about the Recovery home at 105 Highfield Street.

The Sakihitowin Recovery Home at this address is intended to provide safe and supportive housing for up to seven adult males who are in recovery from substance use. To help answer your questions:

### **Resident background**

- All residents must be sober when they move in.
- The majority come directly from treatment centres, where they have completed intensive recovery programming.
- Residents are not accepted if they pose a risk to the safety of others. Individuals with convictions related to sexual assault, or anything related to children are **not eligible** for this program.

### **Expectations and support**

- Residents are required to attend regular AA/NA meetings, participate in random drug testing (usually twice a week), and follow an 11:00 p.m. curfew.



## **Expectations and support**

- Residents are required to attend regular AA/NA meetings, participate in random drug testing (usually twice a week), and follow an 11:00 p.m. curfew.
- Each resident works on personal recovery goals, including employment readiness and family reunification.
- Staff check in daily, provide counselling, and ensure the home remains a safe, stable environment.

## **Purpose of the home**

- The home is designed to support people who are committed to their recovery journey.
- It provides up to two years of stable housing where residents can live with peers who are also in recovery, holding each other accountable, building community, and celebrating successes together.

Our goal is to ensure the home not only supports residents but is also a positive part of the neighbourhood. We value open communication with community members, are committed to being good neighbors and are happy to connect further

Description:

Recovery Home (sober home). The program is semi structured with a combination of required participation and exercising autonomy and independence. Residents are exposed to traditional recovery paths like mental health counselling and participation in peer support groups as well as provided opportunities for employment & training, education, volunteering, and leisure activities. 90% of the residents we work with are parents. In cases of family system disruption, we work with all parties to facilitate thoughtful family reunification plans. We work with many partner agencies to provide wraparound support with a multi-disciplinary approach to addiction and mental health recovery.



REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY  
OF **WOOD BUFFALO**

Date of Posting:  
October 21, 2025

## Approval of Development Permit 2025-DP-00321

Civic address

**105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2**

Legal Land Description

**Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092**

Dear Jo-Anne Packham & Wood Buffalo Wellness Society,

I would like to bring to your attention that this decision is subject to appeal. The deadline for you to file an appeal is twenty-one (21) days from today.

Online advertising and notice delivery to adjacent residents will occur on Thursday, October 23, 2025. The appeal deadline for residents or other interested parties will therefore be Thursday, November 13, 2025.

Please find attached a copy of the notification letter to be delivered to all property owners within a 60-meter radius of the subject property.

If an appeal is filed by the specified date, you will receive notification by mail from the Legislative Services Department of the Municipality.

Should you have any inquiries regarding the appeal process, please do not hesitate to contact the Clerk of the Subdivision & Development Appeal Board at 780-743-7001 or via email at [SDAB@rmwb.ca](mailto:SDAB@rmwb.ca).

Please feel free to reach out if you require further clarification or assistance.

Sincerely,

**ATIA 20(1)**

Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI  
Planner | Development Officer  
M: DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca  
T: 780-793-1017  
Development Planning Branch  
Planning & Development Services

Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo

9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada T9H 2K4







REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY  
OF **WOOD BUFFALO**

Date of Posting:  
October 23, 2025

## NOTICE TO ADJACENT PROPERTY OWNERS

### Issuance of Development Permit 2025-DP-00321 – Group Home

Civic address

**105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2**

Legal Land Description

**Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092**

The Planner has approved a Development Permit for a Group Home (5-bedroom Adult Recovery Home) at the subject property. The Group Home is required to maintain a residential character and remain in a good state of repair. Also, the Group Home is required to be equipped with functional security cameras around the exterior of the house to enhance safety and security. This Development Permit has been approved on a temporary basis and shall not extend beyond November 1, 2027.

You are notified of this development as a resident within a 60-meter radius of the subject property. You retain the right to appeal this decision to the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board. Should you choose to appeal, a written notice must be submitted to the Secretary of the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) within twenty-one (21) days from this notice, dated October 23, 2025. For further details and to obtain the appeal application form, please contact the Clerk of the Appeal Board.

Subdivision and Development Appeal Board  
9909 Franklin Avenue  
Fort McMurray AB T9H 2K4  
T: 780 743 7001 F: 780 743 7028  
Email: [SDAB@rmwb.ca](mailto:SDAB@rmwb.ca)

Questions regarding the appeal process should be directed to the Clerk of the Subdivision & Development Appeal Board. Any significant concerns arising from this notification will be addressed by the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board.

Sincerely,

**ATIA 20(1)**

Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI  
Planner | Development Officer  
M: DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca  
T: 780-793-1017  
Development Planning Branch  
Planning & Development Services




Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo

9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada T9H 2K4

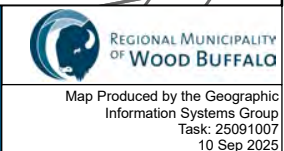


**SUBJECT AREA MAP**  
Notification



 Survey Parcels  
 Adjacent Properties within 60 m  
 Subject Area

**105 HIGHFIELD STREET**  
**Lot 19, Block 42, Plan 7620092**



## Neighbourhood housing tip sheet (fact sheet)

Home > Neighbourhood housing tip sheet (fact sheet)

Show Related Tags

Elected and municipal officials often need to respond to questions about rental, affordable, social and supportive housing. These questions often involve human rights. Here are some human rights points to consider.

## General responses to concerns expressed about the people living in certain types of housing:

- We don't get to choose our neighbours, and municipalities have an obligation to create inclusive communities.
- People with disabilities, students and young people, newcomers and older persons, tend to have lower incomes and are more likely to need affordable housing.
- These people are all part of the community, and have the right to live anywhere in it

- They should not be treated differently than anyone else in a neighbourhood – which means they should not face restrictions to their housing based on stereotypes and assumptions.

## Students and young people:

(For more discussion see *Room for Everyone*, pp.8-9)

- Students and young people may be more mobile than some other community residents in a neighbourhood, but they are still part of that neighbourhood.
- They contribute a great deal to the economic and social life of the community.
- They have the same rights as any of their neighbours to choose the type and location of their housing.
- Students are generally younger, single adults, and many receive public assistance.
- The *Human Rights Code* prohibits discrimination based on age, marital and family status, and receipt of public assistance.
- Single people, young people, and households made up of unrelated adults must not be singled out for different treatment than “families” or older people.

## People with low incomes

(For more discussion see *Room for Everyone*, pp.9-11)

- Some groups may have lower incomes and are more likely to need affordable, supportive, or low-cost rental housing. These groups, which are protected under the *Human Rights Code*, include:
  - People with disabilities
  - Aboriginal people, racialized people and newcomers
  - Young or lone-parent families, and larger and growing families
  - Older people with low, fixed incomes
  - People who receive public assistance

- Students
  - Transgender people
  - Women
- People with low incomes have the same right to housing as anyone else and should not face additional barriers to getting housing
  - These groups are disproportionately affected when affordable housing options are reduced, restricted or not developed.
  - Providing stable, low-cost housing improves health and inclusion, and enables people to fully take part in their community.

## People with disabilities

- People with disabilities are more likely to experience poverty, and to need affordable housing
- Many of us have, or will develop, physical disabilities, mental illness, developmental disabilities, cognitive or sensory disabilities, or have family members or friends with disabilities.
- People with disabilities must not be subject to different treatment than other residents, aside from what's needed to accommodate their disabilities.
- They have the right to be integrated into the community, and to choose where they wish to live.
- Group homes are important housing for many people with disabilities, enabling them to live in the community of their choice, with the necessary supports

## Older people

- Many older people have already lived in a neighbourhood for many years, but may need different housing as they age.
- Restrictions on affordable housing often limit their options, and can force them to sever important neighbourhood ties when they need them the most.



# Restricting affordable housing causes human rights concerns

Lodging houses, group homes, rental housing and other affordable housing are much-needed options for many people who are protected under Ontario's *Human Rights Code*. As well, the Government of Ontario's and [Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy](#) and [Provincial Policy Statement](#) strongly support creating and maintaining affordable housing.

People who often rely on these forms of housing include people with low incomes, Aboriginal people, racialized people, large families, lone-parent families, people who receive public assistance, single people, newcomers, older people, students and young people, and persons with disabilities (including mental health disabilities).

Affordable housing is often discouraged because of stereotypes about the people who will live there, incorrect labelling of the housing as non-residential, or behavioural, health and safety or other concerns that may be better dealt with through other means.

The challenge is to move the debate away from away from discussion of the characteristics of the residents, and toward the value of affordable housing and inclusivity, other measures to address behavioural concerns, legitimate planning and health and safety rationales, and other municipal interests.

Some key points to consider are:

- Affordable housing is a residential use.
  - While some forms of affordable housing provide services to their residents, many homeowners also receive services at home – care-giving, cleaning, meal delivery, and so on.
  - Group homes and other supportive housing are homes for their residents, and should be allowed as of right in residential neighbourhoods, consistent with the same land use principles as any other housing.

- Affordable housing and group homes should be subject to the same considerations as other housing.
  - They should be zoned according to built form and land use principles
  - They should not be subject to zoning restrictions, or different design requirements based on stereotypes about the people who will live there
  - Just as homeowners can choose which neighbourhood they prefer to live in, affordable housing should be allowed as of right throughout the municipality.
- Licensing:
  - Where there is licensing of forms of housing, it should focus on legitimate planning, health and safety, Building Code, property standards and maintenance issues.
  - Effectively enforcing existing municipal bylaws for issues like parking, noise and property standards is often the best way to address problem behaviours in housing and residential areas. Using these existing options ensures that inappropriate behaviour is targeted and addressed consistently and fairly – for renters, landlords, visitors and homeowners alike.
  - Renters are entitled to the same privacy and enjoyment of their homes as homeowners. Licensing should not over-scrutinize renters, violate their privacy, or treat them differently than anyone else living in the neighbourhood.

## Responding to common concerns, dispelling the myths

(For more information see *In the Zone*, pp. 8-10)

### Property values

Concern: This housing will make my property value go down.

Response: Many studies show that affordable housing has no impact on property values.

## **Traffic:**

Concern: This housing will increase traffic in my neighbourhood.

Response: Just like new development, higher-density or infill housing proposals must meet planning and engineering standards. Also, affordable housing and multiple family housing near transit services attract residents who are less likely to have cars.

## **Infrastructure:**

Concern: This housing will put a strain on public services and infrastructure.

Response: Higher-density housing needs less new infrastructure than other types of housing, because it can use existing water and sewer systems, and there are already roads and nearby schools. Also, the new density can support local businesses and increase the range and availability of services, such as transit.

## **Integration:**

Concern: This housing will attract people who don't fit into the neighbourhood

Response: People who need affordable housing are part of every community. They're often already in the neighbourhood, just underhoused or struggling to pay rent by cutting corners on food or other costs. When communities are inclusive, they meet the needs of more residents, and provide more opportunities and choices for everyone.

## **Neighbourhood character**

Concern: Affordable housing won't fit the character of the neighbourhood.

Response: Both affordable and market-rate housing must meet the same building restrictions and design standards of the neighbourhood, and can be designed to fit in with the character of the area.

Concern: Rental housing is not well maintained and brings down the look of the neighbourhood.

Response: Several property standards bylaws can be used to maintain the upkeep of properties.

## **Crime**

Concern: Allowing development of affordable housing will increase crime in my neighbourhood.

Response: A Canadian study of 146 supportive housing sites found that there was no real increase in crimes in general, or in violent, property, mischief or disorderly conduct crimes in the areas (Alice de Wolff, *We are Neighbours: The Impact of Supportive Housing on Community, Social, Economic, and Attitude Changes*, Wellesley Institute, 2008).

People who need affordable housing are already part of the community, and this housing can provide more stability and security.

## **Tenant health and safety**

Concern: This housing will not be safe for the people who will live there.

Response: Several laws and bylaws, such as property maintenance bylaws, Fire Code, Building Code, etc., are already in place to ensure safe housing.

## **Attachments**

File name

[Neighbourhood housing tip sheet\\_accessible.pdf](#)

File size -186.83 KB

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## Sakihitowin Drug and Alcohol Testing

At Sakihitowin we have a 14-panel urine drug and alcohol test, which individuals are tested at least once a week, more if staff deems necessary.

Here is a list of substance we test for at Sakihitowin:

Abbreviation	Meaning/full name
1. AMP	Amphetamine
2. BAR	Barbiturates
3. BZO	Benzodiazepines
4. BUP	Buprenorphine
5. ETG	Alcohol (Ethyl glucuronide)
6. FYL	Fentanyl
7. GAB	Gabapentin
8. KET	Ketamine
9. K2	Synthetic Cannabinoids
10. MAMP	Methamphetamine
11. OPI 300	Morphine
12. OXY	Oxycodone
13. THC	Cannabis
14. COC	Cocaine

Below is a more in detail breakdown of each substance, including how long each substance can stay in your urine and could be detected.



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## 1. Amphetamine – AMP

A positive result means traces of this type of stimulant drug have been detected in the person's system.

- **Legal Uses:** Doctors may prescribe them in medications like Adderall, Vyvanse, or Dexedrine to treat conditions such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), narcolepsy (a sleep disorder), and sometimes obesity.
- **Illegal Uses:** They are also made and sold illegally on the street under common names like "speed," "meth," or "uppers".
- **False Positives:** Certain over-the-counter medicines (like nasal inhalers or some cold medicines) or prescription antidepressants can sometimes cause a false positive result on the initial screen.
- It can show up in your urine for 1 to 3 days after you've taken it.

## 2. Barbiturates – BAR

- Barbiturates are a class of central nervous system depressant drugs that were once widely prescribed to treat anxiety, insomnia, and seizures.
- **Medical Use:** While largely replaced by safer benzodiazepines in routine medical practice due to the high risk of overdose, barbiturates are still used for general anesthesia, epilepsy, migraines, and in specific end-of-life circumstances.
- **Abuse Potential:** They have a high potential for physical and psychological addiction and abuse, and slang terms include "barbs," "bluebirds," "downers," and "sleepers".
- **Detection Window:** Short-acting barbiturates are generally detectable in urine for 4 to 6 days, while long-acting ones can be detected for up to 30 days.



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### 3. Benzodiazepines – BZO

- Benzodiazepines, a class of prescription medications that act as central nervous system depressants.
- These medications are widely prescribed by doctors to treat conditions like Anxiety Disorders, Insomnia, Seizures, Sedative before surgery.
- False Positives: Certain other medications, like some nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as naproxen (Aleve) and sertraline (Zoloft), can sometimes cause a false positive result.
- Short acting: May be detectable for 1-3 days.
- Long acting: May be detectable for 5-8 days, and in cases of chronic, heavy use, possibly up to 30 days or more in a urine test.

### 4. Buprenorphine – BUP

- Buprenorphine is primarily used to treat opioid use disorder (addiction to drugs like heroin or prescription painkillers) or manage chronic pain.
- It is a prescribed, legal medication, its presence is expected and normal for patients in medication-assisted treatment (MAT) programs.
- Typically, it is detected in urine for up to 7 to 10 days after the last dose. Naloxone, on the other hand, is usually undetectable within 24 to 48 hours.

### 5. Alcohol (Ethyl glucuronide) – ETG

- Is a sensitive test used to determine if a person has consumed alcohol recently, often several days after the alcohol itself has left the body.
- Detection Window: A urine ETG can typically detect alcohol consumption for up to 3 to 5 days after the last drink, depending on the amount consumed and individual factors
- Because it is very sensitive, it can sometimes produce a positive result from significant exposure to common household products that contain alcohol, such as mouthwash



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#### 6. Fentanyl – FYL

- Fentanyl is a very powerful synthetic opioid.
- Detection Window: Fentanyl can be detected in urine for a few days to as long as a few weeks in cases of heavy, frequent use.
- Some Medications that could cause a false positive for FYL are Labetalol (Blood Pressure Medication) Risperidone (Antipsychotics) Quetiapine (Seroquel) Trazodone.

#### 7. Gabapentin – GAB

- Gabapentin is an anticonvulsant medication primarily used to treat seizures and certain types of nerve pain.
- This medication can be prescribed for Seizures, Anxiety, Nerve pain or Alcohol withdrawal support.
- Can be detected in urine for 1 – 3 days, sometimes longer with heavier usage.

#### 8. Ketamine – KET

- Ketamine affects the brain differently than opioids, alcohol, or benzodiazepines.
- Used illicitly for its dissociative or hallucinogenic effects.
- Originally developed for surgery and emergency medicine.
- Commonly misused for emotional numbness, escaping feeling.
- Detectable in urine for 1- 3 days.

#### 9. Synthetic Cannabinoids – K2

- K2 is a synthetic chemical that acts like cannabis but is much stronger and more unpredictable. It can be very dangerous, even in small amounts.
- Uncommon for any type of false positive.
- Can be detected up to 1-3 days after usage in a urine test.



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#### 10. Methamphetamine – MAMP

- A powerful central nervous system stimulant.
- False positives are rare but can occur with certain prescriptions of ADHD medication like amphetamine, dextroamphetamine, or selegiline.
- MAMP can be detected up to 1 – 3 days after usage in urine test, 5-7 days if heavier usage.

#### 11. Morphine – OPI 300

- Detects natural opiates like Morphine, Codeine, Heroin metabolites.
- False positive can occasionally occur due to certain cough syrups. Poppy seeds from food, this is rare but possible with large amounts.
- OPI 300 can be detected up to 1 – 3 days after usage in urine test, longer if heavier usage.

#### 12. Oxycodone – OXY

- Oxycodone is a prescription opioid used to treat moderate to severe pain.
- Brand names include Oxycontin, Percocet (combined with acetaminophen) and Roxicodone.
- Binds to opioid receptors in the brain and spinal cord.
- Detection window in urine: typically, 1–3 days, longer with chronic use.

#### 13. Cannabis – THC

- THC refers to tetrahydrocannabinol, the main psychoactive compound in cannabis.
- Certain medications: Some NSAIDs, proton pump inhibitors, or hemp products can cause false positive.





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- Secondhand smoke exposure is generally not enough to trigger a positive at standard cutoffs.
- THC can show in your system from a single use for about 1 – 3 days, longer with continuous usage.

#### 14. Cocaine – COC

- COC tests for cocaine usage.
- False positive for COC is extremely rare.
- Detection of COC can show in urine for 2 – 4 days for occasional usage, 1 week or longer for heavier usage.

WBWS - Sakhitowin Recovery Living Program																											
Urinalysis Testing Data																											
Participant #	Week - 24	Week - 25	Week - 26	Week - 27	Week - 28	Week - 29	Week - 30	Week - 31	Week - 32	Week - 33	Week - 34	Week - 35	Week - 36	Week - 37	Week - 38	Week - 39	Week - 40	Week - 41	Week - 42	Week - 43	Week - 44	Week - 45	Week - 46	Week - 47	Week - 48	Notes	
Client #00321		Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative x 2	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative		
Client #00322	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative x 2	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative		
Client #00323						Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative																		
Client #00324						Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative x 2	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative		
Client #00325		Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Positive	Negative x 2	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative									See second page	
Client #00326													Negative x2	Negative	Negative												
Client #00327																							Negative	Negative	Negative		
Client #00328		Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative x 2	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Positive	See second page	
Client #00329	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative		
Client #00330						Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	Positive		See second page	

\* See Sheet 2 for information on positive tests

WBWS - Sakhihitowin Recovery Living  
Urinalysis Testing Data

Participant #	Week - 24	Week - 25	Week - 26	Week - 27	Week - 28	Week - 29	Week - 30	Week - 31	Week - 32	Week - 33	Week - 34	Week - 35	Week - 36	Week - 37	Week - 38	Week - 39	Week - 40	Week - 41	Week - 42	Week - 43	Week - 44	Week - 45	Week - 46	Week - 47	Week - 48	Notes
Client #00325												25-Aug														Slipped ETG in Calgary/Attended Detox. Returned on Sept 1
Client #00328																									24-Nov	Slipped on GAB/Attend Detox Returned on Dec 01
Cleint #00330																								22-Nov		Slipped on COC&ETG - Terminated for not attending Detox



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### RULES AND REGULATIONS OF TENANCY

1. Residents are responsible for disposing of all garbage and recycling property using the designated bins located outside the house. On Garbage collection day bins must be placed at the curbside.
2. Residents are expected to use yard, entrances, and walkways respectfully and help keep areas clean, tidy, and free of debris, including ice and snow, to ensure a safe and welcoming environment for everyone.
3. Residents are responsible for ensuring windows are closed when needed. If windows are left open by the resident or their guest and this results in damage (such as frozen plumbing or water damage), the resident will be held responsible for the resulting repairs.
4. The Resident agrees to immediately report to the Landlord any and all damage that may occur to the premises.
5. Only small picture hooks, scotch tape and tacks may be used for hanging pictures on the premises.
6. The hallways, stairs and other shared areas are for walking through the home. Please do not block any common areas with personal items or trash
7. To help keep the home clean and comfortable for everyone, any wet or soiled footwear should be removed at the entrance and either left there or taken into your room.
8. No structural alterations, painting, papering or redecorating shall be done by the Resident without prior written consent of the Landlord.
9. Neither the Resident nor the Landlord shall add to or change locks on doors giving access to the premises or property of which the premises form a part without the prior written notice/consent of the other party.



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10. The Resident must keep and observe all health, fire, police and bylaw regulations of the province and city, town or Municipality in which the house is located.
11. No additional electric wiring or heating units shall be installed on the Premises or Property without the prior written consent of the Landlord.
12. No combustible material or flammable liquid shall be kept on the Premises or Property except in small quantities and in containers approved for this purpose.
13. If the Resident is absent from the premises and the premises are unoccupied for an extended period of one week or more, the Resident is to notify the Landlord and arrange for regular inspection by a competent person.
14. No waterbed or waterbeds can be used on the Premises.
15. Noise shall not be permitted on the premises which, in the opinion of the Landlord, disturbs the comfort of the of other Residents and / or neighbors.
16. If parking facilities are provided, they are provided at the Resident's own risk, and the Resident is required to park in the stall allotted to the Resident if available. Unlicensed or inoperable vehicles parked on the Landlord's property will be removed at the Resident's expense. Resident will be required to provide Sakihitowin Staff with all appropriate documentation for their vehicle.
17. The Resident will obey any reasonable rules posted regarding the use and care of the house, parking, laundry room and other common areas that are provided for the use of the Resident and other Residents.
18. The Resident shall not place or install display or permit the placement of any signs, notice, advertisement, antennas, or satellite dishes anywhere on the property without prior written consent of the landlord.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Resident

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Landlord

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Rules & Expectations of the Program

The following rules and expectations are in place for the safety and well-being of all residents in Sâkihitowin Recovery House. Please read each point, ask any questions you may have and sign at the bottom. The breach of any of the below rules and expectations will result in disciplinary action including but not limited to your termination from the program.

### GUESTS

1. No guests or visitors in the house unless pre-approved by Sâkihitowin staff.
2. Overnights away from the house are not permitted within the first 30 days and must be pre-approved with the house coordinator. You will be asked to provide a thorough safety and relapse prevention plan prior to consideration, amongst other information as requested.
3. Family reunification is strongly encouraged, however overnights with children are not permitted due to insurance and liability reasons. Family visits can take place in the home with pre-approval and communication between the house coordinator and Child protection/caregivers. You are solely responsible for the care and supervision of your children and all that it entails (cleaning, feeding, activities etc)
4. Individuals of the opposite sex are not permitted in the houses, with the sole exception of maintenance workers who will be accompanied by a Sâkihitowin Staff person. This includes the other respective recovery homes.

### RECOVERY

5. You must be and remain completely abstinent (free of) from all mind- and mood-altering substances not limited to drugs & alcohol and be able to pass frequent and random drug and alcohol screening tests.
6. You will be required to obtain a sponsor or seek guidance from a trusted Elder within your first 30 days in the program and must be actively working on step work from your chosen program of recovery.
7. You must attend 90 mutual aid support meetings (AA, NA, CA, Wellbriety, Women's/Men's recovery etc.) in your first 90 days in the home.
8. Service work/volunteering is a mandatory requirement of the houses. Each resident must complete 10-15 hours of service work/volunteering each month unless working full-time or discussed with your Sâkihitowin Staff.
9. You must provide consent to exchange information with all vital professional and key players that pertain to your overall recovery. This includes but is not limited to physicians, counsellors, lawyers and anyone else deemed necessary by Sâkihitowin Coordinators.
10. You must seek and obtain a counsellor and attend regular counseling sessions during your residency. (Minimum once per month)



11. You must seek and obtain a family doctor and attend regular check-ups as per their discretion.
12. If you slip/relapse you will be asked to leave the home immediately. Your bed will be held for 7 days if you go right to detox or treatment for the 7 days. If you relapse/slip and do not attend detox or treatment immediately you will be terminated from the program. You may reapply for a bed in 30 days. Upon return to the program, you will be required to repay your recovery deposit within 14 days.
13. Upon return from Detox/Treatment overnights away from the house are not permitted within the first 30 days.
14. You will be required to complete a weekly meeting attendance form which will need to be submitted to Sâkhitowin staff weekly, on Mondays.

#### MEDICATION

15. All medications must be listed and pre-approved before admission.
16. To help ensure accurate use, all medication must be kept in blister packs.
17. When taking over-the-counter medication, you must immediately provide a photo of the medication along with the purchase receipt clearly showing the date of purchase. Failure to do so can result in the medication being disposed of. This includes vitamins, cold medication, etc.
18. To ensure your safety and recovery, please keep all medications stored securely in your bedroom.
19. Staff members will regularly check and count medications to ensure they are being used properly
20. New prescriptions must be reported to Sâkhitowin Staff immediately to ensure they are permitted within the program.
21. Sublocade is the only approved drug replacement therapy within the program. Individuals not yet on Sublocade must discuss with Sâkhitowin Manager prior to approval.
22. Narcotic and/or opiate medications such as Tylenol 3's, Percocet, hydromorphone, oxycodone, codeine, tramadol, and possibly other medications are not permitted in the house. In the case of being prescribed any of the listed medications above, it is your responsibility to inform the prescribing healthcare provider and request an appropriate non-narcotic alternative.
23. To maintain a safe and supportive recovery environment for everyone, medical marijuana is not permitted in the program.

#### CONDUCT

24. There is a zero-tolerance policy for violence, threats of violence, aggression, bullying or posturing. This can/will be grounds of termination from Sakihitowin Recovery Living Program.
25. Curfew is 11:00pm (2300hrs) unless otherwise approved by a Sakihitowin Staff member.
26. Your room, as well as the house in general, needs to be kept clean and in neat order.

27. New relationships are not recommended or encouraged while residing in the homes for a minimum of 6 months, including with residents from other recovery homes and/or house mates. Residents are encouraged to share pre-existing relationships during intake to support open conversations about boundaries and recovery.
28. Residents work together to complete household and yard chores, following a posted schedule.
29. Lending or borrowing money or other items (including medications, clothing, hygiene items etc) is not permitted. Engaging in this behavior may lead to program consequences and in some cases could result in termination from the program.

#### GENERAL

30. Program Fees are due on or before 12pm (1200hrs) noon on the first day of each month.
31. You must submit in writing at least 30 day's notice to end your tenancy.  
Failure to do so waves your right to have your recovery deposit returned.
32. When your tenancy ends in any way, you are responsible for the packing of your belongings and cleaning of your space. Any belongings left will only be held for 14 days before being disposed of or donated. Failure to properly clean your space can/will result in a deduction from your recovery deposit.
33. If you have a phone, you are expected to respond to Sâkihitowin staff within 3-hours of receiving a call or text unless you are working or is pre-arranged.
34. If you are released on a court order, All aspects of the order must be followed to avoid returning to jail.
35. If you are involved with Drug treatment court, all expectations of that program must be followed in addition to the above and below stated rules & expectations.
36. To support your safety and recovery, please check in each night by texting a Sakihitowin Staff member before 11:00pm.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ hereby acknowledge and agree to follow all of the above listed program rules and expectations to the best of my ability and understand the consequences shall I not.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Resident Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sakihitowin Staff Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



# Systemic and societal human rights issues in housing

## 5.1. Inclusive design in the housing sector

People protected under all grounds in the *Code* should be able to access housing and face the same duties and requirements as everyone else with dignity and without impediment. Housing providers, and other responsible parties including government, are required to make sure that the housing they supply and programs they administer are designed inclusively. They are also required to remove existing barriers to housing, subject to the standard of undue hardship. In this consultation, the Commission heard about problems associated with the lack of inclusive design in both physical features and in applicable policies and programs.

### Built design and physical features

As was noted in the background paper, principles of universal design must be incorporated into the development and construction of housing, and new barriers should never be created when building or renovating facilities.<sup>[91]</sup> Inclusive design elements relating to physical features of buildings may benefit people protected under a few different *Code* grounds, along with other tenants. For example, a fully sound-proofed apartment would meet the needs of a tenant who uses a walker or a tenant with multiple children while also yielding benefits for the neighbouring units.

While the principles of inclusive design apply to all *Code* grounds, most consultees told the Commission about situations in which the principles of inclusive design relating to disability are not being met. For example, the CMHA, Ontario commented that inclusive design to meet the needs of people with mental illnesses (who often prefer to live alone rather than with a roommate) would require the creation of more affordable bachelor and one-bedroom apartments. The Canadian Hearing Society noted that most rental housing units do not supply fire safety equipment to ensure that all tenants, including people with hearing impairments, are alerted in a timely way in the event of a fire. Hamilton Mountain Legal and Community Services noted that they receive many calls from tenants regarding buildings without entrance ramps or the existence of other barriers to mobility. Concerns about the lack of visual alerting systems and buzzer systems to allow tenants with disabilities to identify visitors and open the doors for them were commonly raised. The Commission was also told that people with chemical sensitivities face a lack of rental housing that meets their needs because of features like carpeting.

Housing providers raised concerns about being required to redesign and retrofit older buildings to meet accommodation requirements. FRPO suggested that accommodation and inclusive design requirements should only be applied to new buildings. The Commission agrees that an emphasis on inclusive design in all new buildings would benefit housing providers, tenants and society at large. However, housing providers would still be obligated to remove existing barriers, subject to the undue hardship standard.

Concerns were raised about the failure of the existing *Building Code* to set standards for inclusive design. MMAH submitted that several accessibility requirements are included in the “Barrier-Free Design” section of the *Building Code* and that the *Building Code* was most recently amended in 2006. However, many of the Commission’s concerns, noted in its 2002 submission on the *Building Code*, have not yet been addressed.<sup>[92]</sup> Tenant advocates noted that the *Building Code* still does not ensure access for many people with disabilities, including people with large mobility devices and persons with environmental sensitivities (Hamilton Mountain Community and Legal Services). Reliance on relevant building codes has been clearly rejected as a defence to a claim of discrimination under the *Code*.<sup>[93]</sup>

Similarly, consultees including ARCH raised concerns about flaws in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* standards that have been developed to date.<sup>[94]</sup> They also expressed concern that future standards, such as such as the Accessible Built Environment Standard may also fall short. MMAH indicated that it is the lead Ministry for the Committee developing this standard. The Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) is responsible for administering the *AODA*.<sup>[95]</sup>

## Programs, policies and practices

The principles of inclusive design are not just applicable to buildings, physical structures or other elements of built design. They are equally applicable to programs, policies and practices that could pose barriers to access for people protected under the *Code*.<sup>[96]</sup> The Special Rapporteur on adequate housing has said that the design of policies and programs “should be based on a human rights framework and should fully recognize the right to adequate housing.”<sup>[97]</sup>

The Commission heard that there is a need for Ontario’s housing programs to be designed to include *Code*-protected groups with specific needs. For example, ACE stated that there is a need for increased access to sufficient, adequate and affordable housing options for older people with mental illnesses who have ongoing complex physical or chronic health care needs. The OFIFC said that although Aboriginal youth are overrepresented in the child welfare and youth justice systems and are at risk of homelessness upon discharge, there are no specific affordable housing programs for urban Aboriginal youth.

The OASW said that the housing system is not “tenure neutral.” Rather, higher-income people who are best able to help themselves in the market system and buy a house are disproportionately assisted by government programs and subsidies. It further indicated that lower-income people, whose housing rights have not been achieved, receive very little assistance, if any, and are forced to live in some of the worst quality housing.

Consultees including CERA/SRAC provided examples of government programs, policies and practices that may infringe the requirement to design inclusively:

- chronological based allocation of social housing (affecting youth, newcomers and people in immediate need)
- the failure to provide shelter allowances or emergency assistance to people at high risk of homelessness
- the failure to provide shelter allowances or emergency assistance or alternative accommodation to people at risk of eviction because of unforeseen circumstances
- lack of clear policies regarding interpretation (ASL, LSQ and languages other than English and French) and other services to ensure equal access to housing
- attitudinal barriers that underlie program design features (for example, imposing strict reporting requirements because of underlying views that social assistance recipients are fraudulent, or excluding people with disabilities from certain forms of housing because of ableist views that they would be unfit for such housing).

Other consultees indicated that there are circumstances in which housing providers may be seen to have failed in their own duties to design inclusively. Examples are when there are rules prohibiting pets in rental unit apartments that may act as barriers to homeless youth, people with mental illnesses, vision loss and other disabilities.

## **5.2. Adequate and affordable housing**

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Mr. Miloon Kothari described what he saw during his fact-finding mission to Canada as “very stark and very disturbing.”<sup>[98]</sup> In his Preliminary Observations on his Mission to Canada in October 2007, Mr. Kothari spoke of the deep and devastating impact of this national crisis on the lives of women, youth, children and men and that, disappointingly, this crisis exists despite multi-billion dollar federal surpluses every year since 1998.<sup>[99]</sup>

In his March 12, 2008 Statement on adequate housing, Mr. Kothari proposed the following measures to ensure the protection of the right to adequate housing:<sup>[100]</sup>

- combination of a humanitarian and a human rights approach to confront inadequate housing conditions and homelessness



- recognition of the right to adequate housing through legislation and policy and through budgetary commitment
- concrete measures to implement this right.

Bill 47, *An Act to establish the right to adequate housing as a universal human right*, passed first reading on March 27, 2008. This Private Member's bill recognizes that every person has a right to adequate housing, in accordance with the rights recognized in Article 11(1) of the *ICESCR*.<sup>[101]</sup> Passage of legislation such as this would be a tremendous step towards realizing the rights recognized in the *ICESCR* in Ontario.

Some organizations such as ONPHA and the Co-op Housing Federation of Canada noted that there are already policy tools to promote housing development for protected groups, such as the *Provincial Policy Statement*.<sup>[102]</sup> While the *Provincial Policy Statement* requires planning authorities to set minimum targets for housing that is affordable to low- and moderate-income households, and to permit and facilitate special needs housing, it was noted that that municipalities set their own housing strategies and often do not carry out the policies because they are not seen as budget priorities. Other submissions and discussions at roundtables indicated that many difficulties in developing a comprehensive and cohesive housing strategy can be attributed to the overlapping jurisdictions of federal, provincial and municipal governments.

While Canada has a unique federal system in which housing is shared across jurisdictions,<sup>[103]</sup> Mr. Kothari clearly expressed the expectation that levels of government would work together: "Nevertheless, whether federal or provincial, municipality or other authorities, the state should devise strategies to ensure the implementation of the right to adequate housing."<sup>[104]</sup>

On April 29, 2005, the provincial and federal governments signed a four-year Affordable Housing Program (AHP) Agreement that is set to expire in 2009. Federal, provincial and municipal governments are investing \$734 million over the life of the program to increase the supply of affordable housing by 20,000 units and provide housing allowances for lower-income families in Ontario (MMAH). MMAH indicated that priority under the AHP is given, but not limited to, Aboriginal people, recent immigrants, persons with disabilities, low-income seniors, persons with mental illness, victims of domestic violence and the working poor.

Consultees acknowledged that new affordable homes have been built under the AHP, and others are in various stages of construction and development,<sup>[105]</sup> however, some were concerned about the definition of affordability used. MMAH indicated that rental units under the AHP must charge rents at or below the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) Average Market Rent (AMR), and that rental projects must have an average rent that is 20% below the AMR. Views were expressed that these units would still be unaffordable to many people and groups identified by *Code* grounds.

Consultees were also concerned that even with the Affordable Housing Program, the enormous need for affordable housing is still not being met.

This program will not address the huge need for subsidized housing in Ontario. The rents will not be affordable to households on the social housing waiting lists (125,000 in 2004) as they will be set at rates just below average rents in the private sector (Kensington-Bellwoods Community Legal Services).

There were areas in which the current Ontario government's progress on housing for low-income households was applauded. For example, some consultees commented positively on progress made under programs such as the Strong Communities Rent Supplement Program (SCRSP)<sup>[106]</sup> and the Provincial Rent Bank Program which provides assistance to cover up to two months' rent arrears.<sup>[107]</sup> Households assisted under the SCRSP are provided with a rent supplement that reduces the amount of rent paid to 30% of their household income (MMAH). MMAH also indicated that currently, more than 6,600 households are receiving rent supplements, of which 1,321 are living in supportive housing units.

On the other hand, concerns were raised about the availability of these programs compared to the number of people in need. In addition, the Commission heard that the eligibility criteria for some of these programs make them inaccessible to people on disability pensions or social assistance. MMAH noted that some service managers allow or disallow social assistance recipients and social housing tenants from accessing rent bank assistance because they already benefit from other programs. The Commission was told that similar eligibility criteria exist for other programs that could otherwise alleviate disadvantage for *Code*-protected groups and individuals.

A case in point is the Rental Opportunity for Ontario Families, or ROOF. Consultees noted that the Ministry of Housing has come up with a catchy acronym, but the eligibility criteria screen out many low-income tenants. The Commission heard that the \$100-a-month benefit is not available to social assistance recipients or pensioners and that only families with a dependent child under 18 will qualify. Single individuals, childless couples and parents of grown children also need not apply (PACE).

## Social housing

There are over 250,000 units of social housing in Ontario, including public, non-profit and co-operative housing, modified and supportive units. Most of these are funded and administered by municipalities (MMAH). MMAH indicated that it is the responsibility of the province to meet the needs of low-income and vulnerable households, for example by giving priority access for victims of domestic violence, safeguarding the number of modified units for people with physical disabilities, and applying special social housing application rules for homeless persons. The Service Managers Housing Network (SMHN) said that there is a diverse range of social housing and it should not be

assumed that social housing is administered the same way province-wide as there are local capacities and priorities. For example, not all social housing is regulated under the *SHRA*.<sup>[108]</sup>

Consultees indicated that people in social housing are more likely than tenants in the private rental market to be people with disabilities, seniors, sole support parents, new immigrants and racialized people. Tenants in social housing have the “double burden” of low income along with special needs and the associated barriers in society (North Peel and Dufferin Community Legal Services).<sup>[109]</sup>

Social housing providers spoke about the important role they play in providing access to affordable housing to groups protected by the *Code* and people with low incomes. Social housing fills the gap for low-income people by providing supportive housing, government-funded subsidies and rent-geared-to-income (RGI) housing that would not necessarily be available to tenants in the private sector. However, housing providers indicated that the scarcity of social housing poses a challenge for them in managing eligibility requirements prescribed by the *SHRA* and the administration of the waiting lists (see below).

CERA/SRAC said that social housing must be seen as one among a number of positive measures required of governments to address the unique needs of disadvantaged groups in housing:

From this perspective, additional considerations apply to social housing, such as whether resources allocated by governments for subsidized housing are reasonable and adequate to remedy growing homelessness among *Code*-protected groups, and whether program design is consistent with the obligation to take reasonable measures to prevent the denial of adequate housing to disadvantaged groups.

Many consultees discussed supportive housing. This housing bridges the gap between housing, support services and health care, by providing various programs, including assisted living, long-term care, and/or other services to tenants. The province directly funds and administers dedicated supportive housing (MMAH). Support services are essential to the full integration into and participation in society, or a housing complex, of people who have been marginalized because of *Code* grounds, and in particular people with mental illness. When available, such services assist tenants in dealing with landlords and other tenants and maintaining housing. The impact of appropriate supportive housing on a person’s quality of life can be tremendous:

I spent over 30 years in chronic care simply because there wasn’t the proper type of housing for myself as a person with a disability. When the opportunity finally came, I had become so dependent psychologically on that type of model of care; I wasn’t prepared to move out. I am now receiving 24-hour attendant care in the support service living unit, and it has changed my life. I feel better in terms of my physical health, my mental health. I am working part-time. I am now able to volunteer in terms of peer support, [at a] rehabilitation hospital. I participate on various boards of directors, things that I had no desire or opportunity to do before (Supportive Housing Tenant).

However, the Commission heard that criteria to access support may be so stringent that people have to be homeless before they are even eligible for service. For people with mental illnesses, the lack of supportive housing may result in continued detention in institutions, even when there is no longer medical justification for such detention.<sup>[110]</sup> The Commission heard that the people with the most severe disabilities, for whom supportive housing is an absolute necessity, are often turned away because their needs are viewed as being too great. This may lead to institutionalization or homelessness.

The shortage of social housing placements and the operation of waiting lists means that some people may be unnecessarily placed in supportive housing while other people who need specific kinds of supportive housing can't get it. For example, the Commission was told about women being placed into supportive housing when they need housing to escape domestic violence, and people with mental and physical disabilities being placed in housing for seniors where they did not receive the care they needed. In some cases, the Commission heard that landlords, superintendents and other housing providers are put in the position of acting as support workers to tenants with mental health issues because of a lack of appropriate support services. The Commission also heard that lack of support services may be a factor leading to eviction, when a tenant is unable to live independently in his or her unit because such services are unavailable.

A few social housing providers stressed the importance of maintaining and funding housing specialized to meet the needs of particular groups protected by the *Code*. For example, Mainstay Housing indicated that they have staff and tools to help tenants with mental illnesses on their journey to recovery that other landlords and social housing providers do not. These views were echoed by other housing providers, including the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors:

Seniors' social housing providers are committed to development and management of housing communities that meet the unique needs of seniors, including social isolation and age-related mobility issues, either in independent housing or in housing with related supports needed to enable seniors to maintain their independence.

Other housing providers noted the importance of ensuring that people with an intersection of grounds receive appropriate services. One participant stated that after devolution from the province to municipalities, many ethnic homes for seniors lost their mandate. This meant that seniors of ethnic backgrounds had to resort to the central housing waiting list to get a unit in any facility, even if those facilities were not equipped to provide what they needed in terms of a suitable cultural living environment.

The Commission heard about problems arising from the consolidation of community support services by several health care providers funded by the province through the Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs). In specific, the Commission was told that services for persons with physical disabilities, including feeding, bathing and toileting and the administration of medication,

are being withdrawn from people who live in public housing. As a result, people who have lived independently for decades have been told to move or to simply do without the essential services that they need to live independently.

Consultees also described practical problems experienced by tenants in supportive housing arising from rules about visitors or the use of motorized mobility aids in the building. When tenants with disabilities receive housing and attendant care through the same service, complaints in one area could jeopardize the other, so tenants are unlikely to complain about, and are increasingly vulnerable to, abuse (Hamilton Mountain Community and Legal Services).

Concerns were also raised about rent-geared-to-income (RGI) assistance, which is provided to a social housing provider and administered by a service manager under the *SHRA*. This kind of assistance makes it possible for an eligible family or individual to pay a lower rent that is proportionate to their income. This is an important element in current strategies for making housing more affordable for low-income persons and families. However, the Commission was told that RGI housing requirements disproportionately affect people with mental illnesses.

Many people with mental illness do not have bank accounts, have not filed tax returns, or have had their ID lost or stolen and the application process cannot be completed until all the paperwork is in place. Once a person's name is on the list, the wait time for a one-bedroom apartment can be 18 months or more, and the [housing provider] often sets mid-month entry dates when clients have no money for the extra rent or utility deposits. (PACE).

Another concern that arose with respect to RGI housing programs is that when low-income tenants earn extra income, this is met with a corresponding decrease in the housing subsidy from the social housing provider. In a 2007 report studying systemic poverty released by the Metcalf Foundation, the author indicates that for each dollar earned by an immigrant in Toronto receiving multiple social services, public housing rents go up 30 cents on the same dollar.<sup>[111]</sup> The author commented that "removing subsidies from poor Ontarians in an uncoordinated way makes it impossible for recipients to achieve a greater self-reliance," or to escape the poverty trap.<sup>[112]</sup>

The length of waiting lists for subsidized housing was noted as a concern in the CESC's recent observations<sup>[113]</sup> and was raised by both tenant advocates and housing providers in this consultation. Municipalities are accountable to the province and their municipal councils for maintaining the waiting list for social housing (MMAH). The Commission heard that excessive wait times associated with access to affordable housing in both social housing and co-ops means that subsidized housing is not a viable option for a large majority of low-income tenants in Ontario, many of whom are protected under the *Code*. Numerous examples were provided of wait times in the range of 5 – 10 years and drastic changes in the tenant's circumstances in the intervening years.



During the long wait for an affordable home, few people receive the housing they need when they need it: youth become adults, families grow up, people with serious illnesses or disabilities suffer, newcomers scramble to house themselves and their families, and the elderly and the homeless die (CHFC).

The end result is that many people end up paying more than 50% of their income on rent while waiting. For example, the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto described a client with two children who has been on a social housing list for nine years and in the meantime is paying more than 70% of her income on rent. Other people do not even bother applying because of these wait times.<sup>[114]</sup>

The high need for subsidized and affordable housing means that certain individuals will be screened out or wait listed because of the scarcity of the resource (ONPHA). For example, the Commission heard that Aboriginal people seeking housing are often referred to Aboriginal agencies rather than being given priority on social housing waiting lists. However, the disproportionately high core housing need among the urban Aboriginal population means that the demand for Aboriginal-specific social housing significantly exceeds the supply/availability of affordable housing units designated for this population (OFIFC).

Waiting lists are based on date of application, and victims of domestic violence have priority across the province (MMAH). However, the Commission heard that the lengthy waiting lists make such priority status meaningless, as women experiencing violence still may not be in a position to leave when they need to. Women in this situation are forced to make decisions between two bad alternatives with serious consequences for themselves and their children:

These women engage in a complex decision-making process:

Should I try to survive with little economic supports and expose my children to hunger, malnourishment, homelessness, violence, and potentially apprehension by welfare authorities, or should I return to the abusive relationship where my children will have food and a roof over their heads, but where I expose all of us to violence and possibly death? (CERA/SRAC/NWWG).

Other submissions, including that of MMAH, pointed out that service managers have discretion to identify local priorities to meet the needs of "disadvantaged groups." For example, SMHN noted that local priorities could include youth who are 16-17 years old, people who are terminally ill and newcomers to Canada. However, due to scarcity of housing, the Commission heard that there are difficulties in setting these priorities and they may be perceived to create inequities.

Balancing the needs of current residents with people on the waiting list is also an issue. The Commission was told that although the goal is to maximize the number of people who can access affordable housing, this can affect people with changing family sizes.

Empty nesters can often move into a smaller unit within their co-op and most co-ops make these transfers a priority. But if the co-op has no smaller units, there is a conflict between the interest of the older adult – who could be forced to leave their home, their friends and perhaps medical supports – and those of the family on the waiting list who needs a larger unit. Clearly these are choices that should not have to be made. The solution is more affordable housing in a wide range of unit sizes (CHFC).

A major theme for social housing providers, including the City of Ottawa, was the extent to which the current level of government funding poses a barrier to their ability to offer spots to people on their waiting lists, and to maintain and repair their units and buildings for existing tenants. OFCMAP noted that the lack of funding results in discriminatory practices, inadequate services, homelessness for clients, and a far greater burden on the health care system and on social services. Even where effective programs exist, the transitory or short-term nature of funding was raised as a concern with implications for housing providers, professionals providing services and people in need of housing.

People in need of housing are angered by long waiting lists and lack of help, while mental health outreach workers are frustrated by the lack of financial and human resources to assist those in need. This frustration is exacerbated by government funding of very short-term housing projects. Workers speak of receiving many more referrals than they can realistically handle, and housing outreach projects build up waiting lists and people's hopes, which are then dashed by discontinuation of funding (PACE).

Many consultees spoke in favour of modifying the chronological approach to waiting lists. Both tenant advocates and housing providers advocated for providing portable shelter allowances or subsidies as an alternative. This is discussed in more detail in section 5.3 "Poverty and inadequate income levels." However, some consultees including the CHFC argued to maintain the first-come, first-served system, with special priority status for victims of domestic violence. The St. Joseph's Care Group described the dilemma housing providers would face if social housing were allocated based on perceived need rather than chronologically:

In our seniors housing project, how would it be determined who had a higher need – a dialysis patient versus someone in a wheelchair, a person with heart problems versus one with dementia? How would it be decided whose need is more urgent? Who would create a chart with a point system to determine who has a higher "score" and thus would get housing more quickly?...A judgment call would have to be made by the provider, leaving them open to accusations of misinterpretation, bias or discrimination based on illness.

## **Co-operative housing**

The Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada (CHFC) said that “the co-op housing model has proven to be an effective and durable means of providing Canadians with affordable housing.” All housing co-operatives in Ontario are governed by the *Co-operative Corporations Act*<sup>[115]</sup> and many are part of the network of non-profit social housing. For example, about half of the CHFC’s Ontario non-profit members are funded under federal operating agreements, while the others are regulated by the *SHRA* and administered by municipal service managers. Co-operatives often combine mixed income housing, in which a portion of units are subsidized. Issues relating to RGI housing programs also arise in co-ops.

The Commission heard that the future of rent subsidy programs provided to co-operatives is uncertain, that many lack the capital reserves needed to maintain their buildings, and that some may no longer be able to offer housing to low-income tenants.

## The private rental market

With an insufficient supply of social housing available, most renters find housing in the private rental market. Tenant advocates expressed concern that discrimination in rental housing in the private market worsens when there is not enough adequate and affordable rental housing. Landlords can afford to be more selective when demand and need far outstrips supply, without fearing high vacancy rates (OASW). Human rights impacts of commonly used screening tools are described in section 4.2 “Tenant screening practices.”

There are no controls on rent increases when a new tenant moves in – the landlord and tenant can agree on any amount (MMAH).<sup>[116]</sup> Tenant advocates, including ACTO, were concerned about this and expressed the view that vacancy decontrol has led to a rapid decrease in the number of affordable housing units in Ontario. Parkdale Community Legal Services submitted that:

... people moving into the rental market – disproportionately immigrant newcomers, families seeking larger accommodation, youth or students – must pay a significantly higher rent than the previous tenant. This creates a financial hardship for those tenants who generally are least able to afford high rents.

Tenant advocates also noted that, as a consequence, landlords may have a financial incentive to evict tenants from affordable apartments or to be less willing to work out payment plans for arrears when they know they can charge a new tenant higher rent. Impacts on older tenants and newcomers are described in section 4.1. “Highlighting discrimination based on specific *Code* grounds.”

On the other hand, FRPO, EOLO and other housing provider associations argued that the supply of rental housing is negatively affected by rent controls because property quality declines when landlords are unable to increase rents to keep pace with wages, capital, taxes, interest rates and

utility costs. They also submitted that rent controls artificially lower prices and that the most affordable units are kept by households that could afford market rents, thereby shutting lower-income tenants out of a tightened rental market. EOLO told the Commission that factors associated with rent controls result in less access to housing by disadvantaged groups, rather than more.<sup>[117]</sup>

Much of the discussion about housing in the private rental market focussed on rooming houses and basement apartments. Rooming houses play an important and viable role in meeting affordable housing needs of people protected under the *Code* who are unable to afford conventional housing.<sup>[118]</sup> The Commission heard that across Ontario, many marginalized groups such as low-income individuals, seniors, students, newly arrived refugees and immigrants, and people with disabilities, including mental health concerns, rely on rooming houses for accommodation (Rupert Coalition).

The Rupert Coalition defines a rooming house as “any building in which renters occupy single rooms and share kitchens, bathrooms and common areas. Rent in licensed rooming houses ranges from \$400 to close to \$600 a month, making rooming houses the most affordable form of permanent accommodation available for low-income single people.” The submissions received confirm that the trends noted in *The Report of the Mayor’s Homelessness Action Task Force: Taking Responsibility for Homelessness (Golden Report)* almost 10 years ago still hold true today:

Rooming houses and accessory apartments play a critical role in the housing market, one which is taking on added significance as other options continue to disappear. With cutbacks in social assistance, the termination of new social housing programs, and low vacancy rates in the rental apartment sector, rooming houses and second suites have become a permanent way of life for many individuals and families. They are no longer a temporary form of housing.<sup>[119]</sup>

Consultees, such as Project Connect, emphasized that when housing placement workers are looking for housing under \$500 per month for clients with low incomes or on social assistance, rooming houses may be the only option. For many, a rooming house may be the last permanent housing option before homelessness (Rupert Coalition).

While rooming houses may be the most viable option for individuals and families with low incomes, far too often, they do not provide a safe, comfortable home. As a result of restrictions on legally registered rooming houses, the Commission heard widespread concerns about the growth of unregulated and un-inspected rooming houses to fill this void in the housing market and the substandard rental conditions their occupants may be subjected to. For example, PACE noted common problems that make rooming house tenants feel desperate and helpless such as mice and other rodents, thefts by other tenants, poor wiring, heating and insulation and disrepair.

Landlords and tenant advocates were concerned about NIMBY opposition to developing affordable housing in the private market, such as rooming houses, basement apartments and high-density

housing. These kinds of issues are discussed in section 5.5 “Discriminatory NIMBY opposition to affordable housing.”

Many consultees suggested that basement apartments and secondary suites, when appropriately regulated, provide a safe and affordable housing option in the private rental market. MMAH pointed out that municipalities may establish second unit policies without appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board. However, other consultees indicated that in the past, there has been legislative support for creating good quality basement apartments and second suites.<sup>[120]</sup> The Commission heard that some tenants with low incomes rent “illegal” basement apartments that do not comply with municipal zoning by-laws and do not meet health and safety standards. These tenants are at heightened risk of homelessness if this comes to the attention of the local authorities.

[O]nce the local bylaw departments discover the rental units, the departments order the tenants to vacate the units on very short notice. Tenants in this predicament find that they are powerless to challenge these orders and are at immediate risk of homelessness. Given these dire consequences, tenants in these illegal units are reluctant to assert their rights under the RTA, nor do they complain to bylaw, health and fire departments even when there are serious concerns about these units (Community Legal Clinic of York Region).

Private landlord associations submitted that conversion policies, which prevent the demolition, redevelopment and intensification of old rental buildings, have a detrimental effect on increasing the supply of rental housing. FRPO stated that these policies create a barrier to the supply of affordable housing by reducing the number of available affordable home ownership opportunities for tenants, discouraging capital investment in older buildings and deterring investment in new rental housing. Conversely, some consultees argued that conversions result in a decrease of available rental housing supply, because it is more profitable to convert rental properties into homes for ownership.

In Cabbagetown, which has experienced gentrification like perhaps no other area in the city, the number of rooming houses has decreased dramatically. The former rooming houses have been re-converted into single family homes. This is fine as it goes. However, our experience is that the new homeowners have become, at times, simply anti-rooming houses, not wanting “those people” in their neighbourhood and being concerned primarily with property values (Project Connect).

Several landlords and associations said that the tax rate on multi-residential units creates barriers to affordable housing for low-income people. According to the London Property Management Association, multi-residential housing units are taxed 2.5 times higher than owner-occupied dwellings. As a result tenants, many of whom are lower income and protected under the *Code*, end up paying proportionately more tax through rent payments than do homeowners. FRPO advocated for equalizing the tax rate for homes and multi-residential properties (over six units) with costs distributed across all property classes to encourage more rental housing development.<sup>[121]</sup>



# Inadequate housing and the admission of children into care

The Commission was extremely troubled to hear that children in Ontario continue to be relinquished or apprehended by children's aid societies because of inadequate housing – concerns that were previously noted by the CESC. <sup>[122]</sup> Consultees connected this issue to *Code* grounds such as family status, receipt of social assistance and race. Recommendations have already been made that government collect statistical data relating to the relinquishment to foster care of children belonging to low-income families, single mother-led families, and Aboriginal and African-Canadian families, to accurately assess the extent of the problem. It was also recommended that the federal, provincial and territorial governments undertake all necessary measures, including financial support, where necessary, to avoid such relinquishment. <sup>[123]</sup> The Commission heard that despite these recommendations, this is very much still an issue in communities across our province.

Although inadequate housing or housing problems are not sufficient grounds to consider a child in need of protection under the *Child and Family Services Act*, <sup>[124]</sup> in practical terms housing increasingly plays a role in outcomes for families. CAST pointed out that their economically disadvantaged clients face substantial obstacles to obtaining adequate and appropriate housing and that, for some of them, this affects their ability to care for their children. As one children's aid society noted:

Although our agency has been reluctant to admit children into our care solely because of inadequate housing, we have had to do so and cannot discharge these children until we are satisfied that they will be in safe environments.

Participants in the roundtables commented that a major factor contributing to the separation of parents from their children is the combination of legislation and policies applied by children's aid societies and housing providers. For example, the Commission was told multiple times about situations where a parent cannot get children back from care until they are suitably housed, but are ineligible for suitable housing until they have their children back. The Commission also heard that because of the shortage of appropriate housing and the availability of services, families live in shelters – thereby delaying the return of their children.

A research study conducted in 2000 showed that in 20% of cases, a family's housing situation was a factor resulting in the temporary placement of a child into care. That same year, in 11.5 % of cases, the return of the child was delayed due to housing-related problems. Housing was a factor in 26% of the cases where parents voluntarily agreed to have their children placed in care and in 74% of apprehensions. Since 1992, there has been an increase in the percentage of cases in which housing was a factor in decisions to place a child in care or delay the child's return to the family. <sup>[125]</sup>



## 5.3. Poverty and inadequate income levels

Human rights violations in housing are often connected to poverty and income. Although social condition is not a ground under the *Code*, discrimination relating to poverty has been addressed through *Code* grounds where there was a demonstrable link between poverty and those grounds. For example, the link between poverty and *Code* grounds such as race, sex and family status, was noted in *Kearney v. Bramalea Ltd.*<sup>[126]</sup> In general terms, the *Code* may be brought into play when the low income is connected to grounds such as race, family status, age, disability or being in receipt of public assistance, such as Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability Support Program benefits (ODSP).

Consultees were concerned that people identified by *Code* grounds such as age, sex, disability (including mental illness), family status, receipt of public assistance and race, place of origin and citizenship (including refugees and immigrants) are disproportionately counted among persons living in poverty. Some consultees referred to international criticisms that poverty rates in Canada remain very high among disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups such as Aboriginal people, African-Canadians, immigrants, persons with disabilities, youth, low-income women and women who are lone parents.<sup>[127]</sup>

Lower-income tenants have fewer choices in the rental market because many of the housing options are out of their price range. On top of this, it was noted that 31% of low-income households move per year compared with 27% of higher-income households (CERA/SRAC). Research studies have shown that a large proportion of landlords prefer not to rent to people with low incomes,<sup>[128]</sup> which further reduces the choices of units available to them. The Commission heard that the tenants with the lowest incomes are often forced to rent apartments that are inadequate and poorly maintained, yet more expensive than others.

A newcomer with children, with no credit or references, who would be disqualified by income criteria and is vulnerable to hidden racism, will find that only a few apartments in Toronto do not disqualify her. She will find that she will have to pay far more for an inadequate apartment than other tenants (CERA/SRAC).

Concerns were also raised about the interpretation of the provisions of the *RTA* within the framework of the *ICESCR*, particularly in relation to evictions for minimal arrears and the impact of this on low-income tenants.<sup>[129]</sup>

## Strategy to address poverty needs human rights focus

The provincial government's most recent throne speech, delivered by the Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario on November 29, 2007, referred to the commencement of work on a strategy to reduce child poverty.<sup>[130]</sup> A cabinet committee has been established to develop poverty indicators and targets and a strategy for making clear-cut progress on reducing child poverty and lifting more families out of poverty.<sup>[131]</sup>

The Commission is pleased to see that the scope of the Poverty Reduction Strategy has been expanded to include both children and their families. However, the Commission is concerned that a large number of other persons, many of whom are protected under *Code* grounds, are also living in poverty.<sup>[132]</sup> It is also of concern that the announced strategy is not explicitly aimed at addressing the concerns noted by the Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) in its past three reviews and implementing recommendations that are within the jurisdiction of the provincial government. For example, the CESCR recommended increasing shelter allowances and social assistance rates to realistic levels.<sup>[133]</sup>

These concerns were also shared by some consultees who noted that the failure by governments of all levels to take meaningful steps to alleviate poverty results in continued disadvantage for people who are lone parents, racialized and have disabilities and others protected by the *Code*. The key example provided by many was the relinquishment of children to children's aid societies as was discussed above.

## Social assistance and living wages

Participants in the consultation expressed the view that recent increases to social assistance and minimum wage rates, <sup>[134]</sup> while welcome, have not been sufficient to enable tenants who rely on these forms of income equal access to housing opportunities. A number of consultees stated that social assistance recipients are worse off today because rate increases have not kept pace with inflation and rent increases.

In Ontario, social assistance rates were cut back 21.6% in 1995, and small increases in the past several years have failed to address the discrepancy between income and rent. A single person in 1995, for example, received \$663 per month. Today they receive a monthly income of \$560. When the rate of inflation is factored in, along with high rent increases, there is an approximate 40% loss of income (Housing Help Centre).

ACTO and other consultees pointed out that the vast majority of people on social assistance rent housing in the private rental market.<sup>[135]</sup> The Commission heard that this means that people on social assistance end up being unable to compete for quality housing at average rents because of their insufficient income. For example, as the Alliance to End Homelessness pointed out, in 2006, Ontario Works benefits for a single person were \$548 per month while average rents were \$633 for

a bachelor and \$774 for a one-bedroom apartment. Similarly the maximum shelter allowance for a single person under ODSP is \$346, while on average it costs \$787 to rent a one-bedroom apartment in Ontario<sup>[136]</sup> (PPAO).

Similar concerns were raised about programs such as Extended Care and Maintenance (ECM) that help Crown Wards prepare for independent living. These programs are funded by children's aid societies from their general provincial allocations, but the permitted monthly allowance of \$663 is too low for youth leaving care to find housing in a safe and supportive environment (CAS, London & Middlesex). The long-term consequences of the failure to provide adequate funding and support for Crown wards leaving care can be significant both for the individual youth and for society at large. There may be increased costs associated with welfare, criminal justice, health and mental health services.<sup>[137]</sup>

Once housed, the lack of sufficient income creates difficulties for tenants in keeping housing and in paying for other costs of living. Where rents are above the shelter allowance allocated by OW and ODSP, individuals on social assistance have to dip into their basic needs allowance to pay their monthly rent or are forced to look at other forms of housing, such as motels or "couch-surfing" (Algoma Community Legal Clinic). These households use a significant portion of their food money to pay rent and often use food banks to feed their families. Young parents are forced into market rent housing that is unsuitable, unsafe, unhealthy and unaffordable – leaving them little money to meet their families' other needs (Humewood House). A tenant on ODSP told the Commission that she has had great difficulties keeping her apartment as the housing costs are higher than what she can realistically afford.

Participants in the roundtables had vigorous discussions about the impact of clawbacks on social assistance recipients and their families. For example, when a child reaches age 18, this results in a loss of income for his or her family and can affect the family's ability to stay in social housing.<sup>[138]</sup> However, as is discussed in section 4.1 "Highlighting discrimination based on *Code* grounds," this young adult would likely face barriers and discrimination in accessing suitable housing in the rental market, and is at risk of homelessness or being under-housed. Recommendations have been made that authorities responsible for public housing, Ontario Works, child care, student aid and other student supports work together to develop a transition planning system to enable eligible young adults to stabilize their own income and that of their families.<sup>[139]</sup>

Minimum wage earners are similarly disadvantaged in the rental market because of incomes that are insufficient to pay for average rents across the province. Consultees expressed concern that the current minimum wage of \$8.00/ hour is not a living wage and that a person working at minimum wage full-time for an entire year will not earn enough to escape poverty.<sup>[140]</sup> In Ontario, the minimum wage is set to gradually rise to \$10.25/ hour in 2010.<sup>[141]</sup> However, advocates for income security had been seeking an immediate increase to \$10.00 in 2005, indexed to inflation.<sup>[142]</sup> It

therefore appears that the concerns raised in the consultation and internationally about the standard of living for minimum wage earners may not yet have been fully addressed.

As many consultees pointed out, minimum wage earners often identify by *Code* grounds. For example, statistics show that “workers of colour”<sup>[143]</sup> and women are disproportionately represented among people earning minimum wage.<sup>[144]</sup> In addition, the Commission was told that the “working poor” find it difficult to locate affordable housing, and are refused housing because they cannot meet the rent deposits or income criteria required by landlords. See also section 4.2 “Tenant screening practices.”

It was also noted that women comprise a large portion of people who are working part-time, in many cases because of caregiving responsibilities. They are in great need of access to a decent living wage as well as other employment benefits such as health and long term disability insurance. However, CERA pointed out that in Ontario, there is no legislation requiring employers to provide benefits to part-time employees on a pro-rated basis and the practice of employers is mixed. The result is that many workers and their families are denied any protection from sudden loss of income due to disability, placing them at a much higher risk of homelessness.

Social assistance and minimum wages rates must be linked to the real cost of rental housing with a view to complying with international obligations and substantively addressing criticisms of Canada’s compliance with them. However, many of the CESC’s 1993 and 1998 recommendations still have not been implemented and a number of serious concerns about income levels still remain.<sup>[145]</sup> These include:

- the absence of a legally enforceable right to adequate social assistance benefits for all persons in need on a non-discriminatory basis
- negative impact of certain workfare programs on social assistance recipients
- insufficiency of minimum wage and social assistance benefits to ensure the realization of the right to an adequate standard of living for all
- social assistance benefits that are lower than a decade ago, that may be less than half the low income cut-off, and that do not provide adequate income to meet basic needs for food, clothing and shelter
- the “discriminatory impact” of the National Child Benefit “clawback system” on the poorest families in Canada, particularly those led by lone mothers
- shelter allowances and social assistance rates that continue to fall far below average rental costs.

## Impacts of low income

A number of consultees, including the Alliance to End Homelessness, linked the risk of homelessness to the growing gap between social assistance or wages earned in minimum wage

jobs and the poverty line. Many low-income tenants end up paying more than they can afford for housing, to the detriment of other important needs such as food or clothing. The CAS, London & Middlesex gave the example of a youth who used almost his entire monthly allowance to pay rent in an appropriate setting away from drug use and dealing, leaving him with almost no money to meet his other daily needs.

Other tenants are resigned to accepting housing that, while cheap, imposes unsuitable living conditions on them and their families. As PACE noted, the view of many tenants is “you have to take what’s given to you” even if that means living in dank, dark basement apartments, foul rooming houses or dilapidated market rental units. Key complaints about quality of housing related to rooms or apartments that need a lot of repair in areas that are run down, polluted or affected by high rates of criminal activities such as drug dealing.

The Commission heard about the systemic failure of housing providers and responsible governments to maintain basic property standards, such as keeping units heated in the winter or installing safe windows or balcony railings, in areas occupied by low-income tenants. This results in low-income individuals and families being denied the right to enjoy equality with respect to their occupancy of accommodation, inconsistent with international human rights obligations (CERA/SRAC).

The Commission also heard about perceptions that LTB adjudicators hold the following attitudes towards tenants who pay low rent:

- thinking they cannot expect the same level of maintenance and repair from a landlord as tenants who pay more
- devaluing damage to a tenant’s property because they are poor while not doing the same for damage to a landlord’s property
- viewing landlords’ concerns as more important than those of tenants, especially people who do not speak English or French as a first language.

## **Portable housing allowances and other ways to increase access to housing**

A number of consultees suggested raising social assistance rates and the minimum wage to levels that would allow families to secure proper housing even in the private market. Other consultees recommended improving mechanisms to help social assistance recipients transition from receipt of benefits to employment, or to reduce the deductions from the income received by people on social assistance.

Consultees noted that increases in the shelter allowance may help some people secure housing, but that a more proactive approach to addressing the needs of all low-income people is necessary.



There was wide consensus among both housing providers and tenant groups that a viable option to enable low-income tenants to compete equally in the rental market is to provide portable housing allowances directly to the tenants to enable them to rent their choice of housing.<sup>[146]</sup>

MMAH indicated that housing allowances are one of four components of the AHP, along with rental and supportive housing, home ownership and Northern Housing. They aim to create affordable rental housing in rental markets with high vacancy rates, and are meant to bridge the gap between the rent that a household can afford to pay and the actual market rent.

Other consultees told the Commission that portable housing allowances target people in the greatest need, and avoid the discriminatory exclusions of youth, newcomers and others that are endemic to a system based on chronological waiting lists for designated social housing units.

This would allow the tenants much greater flexibility in the choice of unit available to them – the same flexibility enjoyed by tenants who do not have financial hardship as their “disability.” Tenants are sometimes forced to endure poor living conditions or relations with neighbours because they simply cannot afford to lose their subsidized unit. If the rent supplement was assigned to them and not to the unit, they could move to a better situation without fear of losing the affordability of their housing (Waterloo Region Community Legal Services).

Housing provider associations like the EOLO and FRPO agreed that there are a number of benefits to offering low-income households a top-up allowance to bridge the gap between income levels and market rent prices. For example, portable housing allowances can provide immediate assistance to tenants and may help people avoid long waiting lists for social housing. They also allow tenants to choose where they live, and encourage mixed-income neighborhoods. Housing allowances can be provided directly to the tenant to give to the housing provider, maintaining the tenant’s privacy and autonomy over their income, and can be used in rural areas and small towns where there are few subsidized units.

...I think housing allowances would be a good choice because they allow the low-income tenants to rent in buildings that are occupied by people at other income levels. They also allow low-income tenants mobility, in that they can rent wherever they choose, they need not be isolated in one general area of the city (Landlord, 50-99 units).

Housing providers also noted that that rent supplements or portable housing allowances can be provided without the landlord or neighbours knowing and can allow tenants to avoid any stigma attached to living in public or social housing. Finally, the Commission was told that such programs can be administered at low cost compared to the costs of building new social housing, and allow flexibility in program design to respond to different regional needs and provincial budgets.

## **5.4. Homelessness and human rights**



Although the causes of, and solutions for, homelessness are complicated, it is squarely a human rights issue. People identified by *Code* grounds such as disability (including mental illness and addiction), race and race-related grounds (including people who are Aboriginal) and family status are more likely than others to experience homelessness.<sup>[147]</sup> For example, ACTO pointed out that Aboriginal persons are over-represented in Canada's homeless population by a factor of 10.<sup>[148]</sup> The Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario said that individuals with serious mental illness are at increased risk of becoming homeless, that 30 – 35 % of the homeless population in general, and up to 75% of homeless women specifically, have a mental illness.<sup>[149]</sup> The Commission also heard that people with mental illness also remain homeless for longer periods of time.

Consultees emphasized that homelessness is not just an issue for people living on the street – people who rely on temporary housing provided by friends and families (“couch surfing”) or who sleep in shelters are still homeless. Increasing numbers of children and women now rely on shelters to temporarily meet their housing needs.<sup>[150]</sup> The Commission also heard that people being released from the criminal justice system tend to stay in shelters during their first month or two although a shelter stay has been associated with increased risk for re-incarceration (John Howard Society of Toronto).

Consultees talked about the wide range of factors leading to homelessness, including municipal, provincial and federal policies and programs, de-institutionalization and situational issues. For many, situational problems are made worse by the existence of *Code*-protected characteristics such as race, disability, sex, receipt of public assistance and family status and the associated poverty.

Families and individuals can lose their housing for any number of reasons: losing a job, having an income too low to stay in their homes or fleeing abuse. Added complications for some are problems associated with physical or mental health issues or substance use (Alliance to End Homelessness).

The John Howard Society of Toronto pointed out that release from incarceration is a significant factor contributing to homelessness.<sup>[151]</sup> The Commission was also told about the barriers to housing experienced by people who are incarcerated and then released. The shelter allowance portion of OW or ODSP benefits are not continued during incarceration, which means that people are more likely to be homeless on discharge, especially since benefits are not reinstated until after discharge.

The lack of assistance finding housing available to people leaving hospital or jail was raised as an issue by a few consultees, including the PPAO.<sup>[152]</sup> People are often discharged without any money, transportation allowance, clothing other than their prison jumpsuits, identification or services to help them reintegrate successfully into the community. People in this situation are unlikely to be able to compete for housing in the rental market, which means that they have to live on the streets, in

shelters or with friends (when possible) while getting re-established in the community. For some, the resulting stresses lead to re-offence (John Howard Society of Toronto).

CERA/SRAC expressed the view that homelessness and the violations of the right to housing in Canada have resulted from cut-backs to social assistance and social housing, and the failure to take any appropriate measures to address the problem and to address homelessness as a violation of human rights. In addition to the CESCR, other international human rights bodies have raised concerns about homelessness as a violation of fundamental rights.<sup>[153]</sup>

The Commission also heard that widespread discrimination against people who are homeless prevents them from accessing affordable housing even when it is available.

People who are homeless are turned away simply because they are homeless ... landlords won't rent to people from shelters, thereby increasing the time they are homeless ... When families and individuals become homeless, the discrimination against them increases exponentially in housing and employment and places a greater strain on the waiting list for social housing (Housing Help Centre).

## **Strategies and solutions to address homelessness**

People who are homeless are at higher risk of death due to a combination of a higher risk of health problems, poverty and, at times, inadequate access to health care.<sup>[154]</sup> Even for people who manage to survive while homeless, the interference with the performance of daily life activities essential for human well-being is significant. One tenant noted that it is impossible to get a job if you are homeless.

Organizations such as the Rupert Coalition commented that having a safe place to live is a vital part of stability and recovery from the mental illnesses and addictions that affect so many homeless people.<sup>[155]</sup> Research has also shown that being homeless increases the duration and seriousness of a mental illness.<sup>[156]</sup>

Given the severe consequences of homelessness, it is imperative that action be taken to address and prevent homelessness as an urgent human rights issue. The Commission's position is that there are many possible ways to tackle this difficult issue. However, the starting point must be a willingness to act on the numerous reports that have been written on this topic, an acceptance of the existence of widespread systemic human rights violations as a factor contributing to homelessness, and a commitment to substantively address international criticisms of homelessness in this province and country. The following are some of the ideas raised on this topic.

CERA/SRAC proposed implementing a human rights strategy to address homelessness as a violation of the right to equality under the *Code*. The homelessness strategy they described would

address the “intersection of employment and housing equality and challenge growing barriers facing disadvantaged groups in securing adequate and stable income necessary to securing and maintaining adequate housing.” This approach is fundamentally based on key principles such recognizing adequate housing as a fundamental human right, the need for positive measures to ensure equal access to housing for *Code*-protected groups and the right to effective remedies.

Consultees, such as the Rupert Coalition, submitted that efforts to increase the availability of rooming houses can have an impact on homelessness because rooming houses provide an important source of affordable housing for low-income tenants.<sup>[157]</sup> Such measures would need to take into account the complex regulatory framework that exists.<sup>[158]</sup> See also section 5.2 “Adequate and affordable housing.”

The OASW said that concrete actions must be taken to actively counter the “dehousing mechanisms” at work in society. This would include creating an action plan with targets for addressing and preventing homelessness. A key element in any such actions would be the need to consider international requirements and criticisms. For example, the CESCR welcomed the National Homelessness Initiative and the adoption of other measures on housing, but regretted that the information provided was not sufficient to assess the results of such measures. In particular, the CESCR was concerned that the estimated number of homeless persons in Canada still ranges from 100,000 to 250,000.<sup>[159]</sup> It was also recommended that specific consideration be given to the difficulties faced by homeless girls.<sup>[160]</sup>

The Commission heard about the need for a multifaceted approach that provides for increased income levels, services and higher quality housing. One consultee referred to a study that showed the positive impact of these on housing in the community studied:

A report from a panel study on the Ottawa homeless population over a two-year period showed that factors such as higher income, access to subsidized housing, assistance from community workers and organizations, support of roommates, an appropriate on-going “basket” of complementary services and supports helped them become housed. Living in better quality housing in terms of comfort, privacy and space was related to higher levels of mental health (Alliance to End Homelessness).

## **5.5. Discriminatory NIMBY opposition to affordable housing**

A number of consultees linked Not-In-My-Back-Yard (NIMBY) opposition to attitudes such as “I don’t want any of those people living near me” or “we’ve already got our fair share” of a particular type of affordable housing. The Commission has previously stated that persons and groups identified under

the *Code* should not have to ask permission from prospective neighbours before moving in.<sup>[161]</sup> Concerns about affordable housing projects should be legitimately anchored in planning issues rather than stereotypical assumptions about the people for whom the housing is being built. Efforts to keep out persons with disabilities, including mental illness, are no less offensive than preventing racialized persons from moving into a neighbourhood.

The Commission heard that discriminatory NIMBY opposition delays affordable housing development, increases its costs and diverts public funds to costly appeals to the Ontario Municipal Board, when these funds could instead be used to create more affordable and supportive housing. It may cause housing providers to feel they need to make compromises to get affordable housing built, even when these compromises undermine the dignity or well-being of their residents. Alternatively, the Commission heard that housing providers may be discouraged from developing affordable housing because of NIMBY opposition. In some cases, *Code*-protected people are exposed to harassment throughout the planning process, and end up feeling unwelcome once they move into their new neighbourhood. Some consultees spoke about the impact of political opposition and delay tactics, sometimes called “NIMTO” (Not-In-My-Term-of-Office).

NIMBY opposition to affordable housing projects can violate the *Code* when it results in changes to existing planning processes, barriers to access to housing or exposes proposed residents to discriminatory comment or conduct. For example, claims of discrimination could arise if a municipality requires additional public meetings or amendments to the planning process solely because the intended residents of a proposed housing project are people with addictions, youth or older people, lone parents, in receipt of social assistance, or people with disabilities including mental illnesses. When planning policies or practices are directed towards, or disproportionately affect, *Code*-protected populations, they may be seen to violate the *Code*. The most common forms of NIMBY opposition and their human rights impacts as described by consultees are summarized below.

## **Zoning definitions that are used to zone out or restrict access to certain people protected by the Code**

Zoning definitions allow some land uses to be included in, and others excluded from, a particular area based on their physical characteristics and function. A wide range of consultees expressed concern about the use of zoning definitions to exclude certain *Code*-protected groups from living in particular areas. For example, concerns were raised that such definitions can be used to reduce the sites available for supportive housing for a protected group, or subject it to additional requirements or a lengthier approvals process (HomeComing Community Choice Coalition). A distinction was drawn between this kind of zoning definition and those in municipal by-laws that are linked to benefits such as fast-tracked approvals for supportive housing. MMAH indicated that a zoning by-

law is invalid if its purpose is to regulate the user, as opposed to the use of land, or define the use by reference to personal characteristics.

## **By-laws that limit or ban certain affordable housing developments**

Concerns were raised about by-laws that aim to keep out certain types of housing developments while allowing others. For example, the Commission heard that zoning by-laws and policies in municipalities across the province prohibit rooming houses in certain neighbourhoods. Consultees such as Project Connect told the Commission that these kinds of zoning by-laws mean that people who rely on rooming houses, and who may be protected by *Code* grounds, are effectively denied a place in the community of their choice. They may also have to accept housing that does not meet their needs, whether because the living conditions are substandard or because it is far from their supports, family members and social networks (Rupert Coalition).

Consultees expressed the view that a by-law that prevents all residential development in a specific zone would be acceptable as it does not have discriminatory impacts. However, a by-law that does not allow rooming houses, group homes or subsidized housing developments for persons protected under the *Code*, while allowing other residential development of similar scale, would be discriminatory. For example, some municipalities prohibit any new social housing, group homes, crisis care homes, lodging homes or rooming houses from being built in an entire neighbourhood. This affects people with disabilities and people in receipt of social assistance. Other municipalities distinguish between housing for psychiatric survivors living in the community and people who were formerly inpatients at a local provincial psychiatric hospital (Individual consultee).

## **Distancing requirements and development moratoria**

A number of municipalities across Ontario have some type of distancing requirements for group homes and other housing options for people with disabilities. MMAH said that the use of separation distance requirements should be justified on a rational planning basis, passed in good faith and in the public interest.

The Commission heard that distancing requirements, caps or quotas restrict or limit where housing for people with disabilities or on social assistance can be built and may have discriminatory impacts. Consultees told the Commission about the following kinds of limits that exist in municipal by-laws across the province:

- maximum number of tenants in group homes or homes for special care
- maximum number of group homes in a residential area



- maximum number of group homes per number of people in total population, per neighbourhood, per lot or municipality.

Such requirements limit the sites available for group home development, and may force housing providers to turn away otherwise ideal housing opportunities. For example, the Commission heard about a couple who wanted to donate their home to an organization that provides housing and supports to people with developmental disabilities. The organization had to turn down this opportunity to create new supportive housing because there was already another group home in the neighbourhood. The Commission was told that such distancing requirements present a barrier to housing for people with disabilities, even where the neighbours are in support of the housing.

The Commission heard that development moratoria, or by-laws temporarily freezing development of land for a maximum of two consecutive years, restrict when affordable or supportive housing can be built. Consultees indicated that they have the same effect as distancing requirements where they limit the development of housing that predominantly serves protected groups or individuals. MMAH noted that municipalities' powers to prepare such a by-law are typically exercised in a situation in which unforeseen development issues arise with the terms of an existing zoning permission, and that anyone who is given notice of such a by-law may appeal to the OMB.

## **Public consultation not required under the Planning Act**

As the Chief Commissioner noted in a November 14, 2007 letter to the editor of the Toronto Star, “questions about land use are a legitimate part of the planning process. However, meetings that allow people to determine who lives in their neighbourhood are another matter.” <sup>[162]</sup> The Commission heard quite a bit about this other kind of meeting in the course of the consultation.

MMAH noted that the *Planning Act* requires, as a basic principle, that the public be given an opportunity to present its views at a public meeting on certain land use planning matters. This was said to be in keeping with the “philosophy of an open and transparent planning system.” However, the Commission was told that affordable and supportive housing developers may be required to participate in expensive and lengthy public consultations that are not set out in the *Planning Act* or in a municipal by-law.

In some cases, the Commission was told that such meetings are required by local councillors, municipal staff or even committees of adjustment when a development seems “controversial” – even if the only controversial element is the characteristics of the people who will live there. Some consultees questioned the utility of these kinds of extra meetings in overcoming fears and false stereotypes, and noted that they seem to wrongly empower neighbours to believe that they are entitled to stop or delay unwanted people from moving into the neighbourhood (HomeComing Community Coalition).



Consultees also spoke against requiring public notification or consultation requirements for “as-of-right” housing developments for protected groups (i.e. those for which zoning changes are not required). The concern about these kinds of requirements is three-fold: first, that the project is being singled out for additional requirements because it is geared towards vulnerable people who may be protected under the *Code*; second, that they add additional obstacles to creating affordable housing; and finally, that people protected by the *Code* may be exposed to discriminatory comments and conduct at such meetings. As Project Connect put it:

Sometimes, when there are community consultations sponsored by the city around affordable housing in Toronto, it has become a prime opportunity for people to express views that are plainly discriminatory. Also, however, behind code words like property values and safety (around a rooming house license “I don’t want those pedophiles near my kids”), people regularly oppose any kind of low-income housing. In addition, it is not unusual to hear: “I’m for it – just not here.” Because this kind of process can foment discriminatory views in public, these kinds of consultations need to be managed differently. As it is, the process for approval can become painful and longer (and thus more expensive for the housing provider).

People protected under the *Code*, and persons advocating for housing on their behalf, are sometimes exposed to inappropriate comments and abuse. This may occur at meetings led by municipal staff or councillors, through websites or pamphlets, posters or flyers. Municipalities and elected officials are expected to ensure that poisoned environments contrary to the *Code* are not created at their meetings. Yet, concerns were raised that municipal councillors may use the same discriminatory language as their constituents and be wary about restricting opportunities for discriminatory comments to be made on the basis of free speech.

The rationale for permitting this abuse is that it represents free speech and true community feeling. For example, at Toronto City Council many councillors voted against a Planning Department recommendation that would have enforced human rights and equity principles at public meetings because they did not want to muzzle their constituents (HomeComing Community Choice Coalition).

Throughout the consultation, the Commission heard about infringements of dignity caused by the following types of comments and conduct at community meetings:

- hundreds of people shouting out objections to having people with mental illnesses move into their neighbourhood
- people with mental illnesses being characterized as rapists, murderers, pedophiles and terrorists
- representatives of community organizations or housing providers, who themselves may be protected under the *Code* because of mental illness or another ground, being ignored or exposed to offensive comments

- young single mothers being told to “get a husband.”

## Design compromises or requirements and community contracts

A number of consultees, including the CMHA, Ontario recognized that design compromises are a normal part of development. However, it was noted that human rights concerns arise when opponents and neighbours demand compromises based on prejudices or fears about the people who will move in.

Sometimes these requirements are part of a municipal by-law or are requested by Council, a Council Committee, or a Committee of Adjustment as a condition of planning approvals or funding or by an individual councilor as a condition for supporting the project. These compromises and requirements may contravene the *Code* when they stigmatize tenants protected by *Code* grounds, or undermine their dignity and prevent their natural integration into the community.

For example, the Commission heard that providers of affordable and supportive housing have been asked to:

- ensure that windows could not be opened by tenants
- frost all windows to prevent tenants from looking at their neighbours
- remove balconies that might allow tenants to overlook their neighbours
- add visual buffering around group homes
- maintain walls that separate affordable housing from neighbouring homes
- blockade or remove gaps in a row of affordable townhouses designed to allow tenants access to their own cars
- bar entrances with iron gates to keep tenants in at night
- add fences, walls, gates, driveway detours or other barriers that prevent protected groups from accessing natural routes to and from their homes.

The Commission also heard that some municipalities require or recommend that housing providers sign contracts with their neighbours as a condition of occupying a building. It was noted that housing providers feel pressured to sign these documents as a sign of goodwill or to retain the local councillor’s support, but that they have the effect of undermining the dignity and privacy of protected groups. Contracts or requirements that impose extra obligations on housing for protected groups may be discriminatory and could give rise to human rights challenges.

For example, the managers of a house for homeless people agreed to report the incomes of all their residents to their east end Toronto neighbours every year. The neighbours had said they wanted to “monitor” residents to ensure no-one received a subsidy they did not deserve (HomeComing Community Choice Coalition).

# Shared responsibility for preventing and addressing NIMBYism

Submissions were made that a double standard exists when it comes to discriminatory NIMBY opposition – that people who do not think of themselves as being prejudiced or discriminatory will say “we don’t want ‘those people’ in our neighbourhood,” “those people will bring our property values down,” or “we don’t want those people unsupervised around our children.” It appears that the human rights implications of these kinds of comments when made, for example in public meetings, in letters to city councillors or on community group websites are often not recognized or challenged, even by people who might otherwise view themselves as tolerant and respectful citizens or leaders.

Many consultees identified a need for greater public education to raise awareness of the human rights impacts of NIMBYism. To help people identify discriminatory statements, the HomeComing Community Choice Coalition has developed a “cringe test.”<sup>[163]</sup> This test allows individuals, including municipal councillors and members of the community, to evaluate whether the statements they are making or hearing would be inappropriate were they made in reference to other *Code* grounds such as ethnic origin.

Some consultees focussed on the need for “inclusive zoning” in which developers of private, for-profit housing would be required to build affordable housing as a benefit given back to the community. Many consultees saw a role for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) in taking concerted action to guide municipalities, particularly in relation to developing by-laws that would limit affordable housing options for *Code*-protected groups and individuals. FRPO suggested the development of a strong provincial policy statement and intervention at the OMB when development applications are being opposed by municipalities.

A number of consultees spoke about the role of municipal politicians and councillors in either contributing to, and supporting, NIMBY opposition or taking a strong stand against it, as a human rights issue. For example, the CMHA, Ontario noted that:

[S]ocial housing developments are plagued by poor political support and political interference fuelling discrimination even more. For example, Ward Councillors often feel duty bound to oppose projects they believe are unpopular with their constituents. As such, projects are often defeated when they apply for planning approvals and the discriminatory practice of “not-in-my-backyard” is reinforced.

The Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) was commended for consistently refusing to accept arguments based on discrimination rather than planning considerations and for not granting such appeals. While the OMB has a mechanism for dismissing frivolous or vexatious cases, it was perceived as being hesitant to use this discretion if there is the slightest chance the appeal has merit. The Commission also heard that the costs involved in defending an appeal can be substantial and can

force some housing providers to abandon their projects, having already spent time, effort and money on the project to that point. For example, one OMB appeal against apartments for people with mental illnesses cost a housing provider over \$300,000 and almost \$9,000 per month for construction delays. Thus, some consultees saw a role for the OMB in ensuring that discriminatory appeals are dismissed at the earliest stage possible, and in advance of expert preparation for the hearing.

In addition, some consultees advocated for developing provincial legislation based on the American *Fair Housing Act*<sup>[164]</sup> as a major element of any strategy to address discrimination experienced as a result of property management practices. Good Shepherd proposed that the following elements be included in such a law:

- a requirement that municipalities have an “affordable housing statement” that includes measures to address discrimination
- rewards such as allocating additional housing to communities that are committed to affordable housing and allowing municipalities to offer other incentives
- measures to make the impact of NIMBY opposition less “painful” and costly, such as authorizing the OMB to reject appeals that are not based on substantive planning arguments.

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[91] *Background Paper*, *supra* note 33 at 22

[92] Ontario Human Rights Commission, *Submission Concerning Barrier-Free Access Requirements in the Ontario Building Code* (March 2002), online: [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/resources/submissions/SubmBldngCode2/pdf](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/resources/submissions/SubmBldngCode2/pdf).

[93] In *Quesnel v. London Educational Health Centre* (1995), 28 C.H.R.R. D/474 an Ontario Board of Inquiry stated: “With respect to the personal respondent’s contention that he complied with local building codes, it is sufficient to note that s. 47(2) establishes the supremacy of the *Code* over any other Act or Regulation which would allow for a contravention of Part I rights. Compliance with building codes does not, in itself, justify a breach of human rights legislation.”

[94] See also Ontario Human Rights Commission, “Proposed Transit Accessibility Standard a setback for Ontarians with Disabilities” (August 30, 2007) and *Submission of the Ontario Human Rights Commission to the Transportation Standards Review Committee regarding the Initial Proposed Transit Accessibility Standard* (August 2007), online: [www.ohrc.on.ca](http://www.ohrc.on.ca).  
[www.ohrc.on.ca/en/resources/submissions/transportsub/publication\\_view](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/resources/submissions/transportsub/publication_view).

[95] *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11.

[96] See for example, *Eldridge v. British Columbia (Attorney General)*, 1997 3 S.C.R. 624.

[97] Kothari, Miloon, “Statement of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context”, Report presented at the 7<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council (12 March 2008) at p. 2.

[98] Smith, Joanna, "UN special envoy to shine spotlight on housing in Toronto," *The Toronto Star* (18 October 2007).

[99] Kothari, Miloon, Preliminary Observations, *supra* note 11 at p. 4.

[100] Kothari, *supra* note 97.

[101] The bill, as currently worded, states that the Government of Ontario undertakes, as far as it considers reasonable and appropriate to do so, to ensure that adequate housing is accessible to those entitled to it; to provide protection from violations of the right to adequate housing, including forced evictions; to provide housing subsidies for those unable to obtain affordable adequate housing; and to take such other measures as it sees fit to recognize, promote and protect the right to adequate housing.

[102] Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH), *Provincial Policy Statement* (2005). MMAH noted that the policy statement was improved in 2005 as a result of planning reforms and permits and facilitates "all forms of residential intensification and redevelopment, and all forms of housing required to meet the social, health and well-being requirements of current and future residents, including special needs requirements." Special needs include "housing used by people who have specific needs beyond economic needs, e.g. housing for persons with disabilities, such as physical, sensory or mental health; housing for the elderly."

[103] Volk, Nick "Canadian Government's response to Miloon Kothari – Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing presentation in Canada" (March 16, 2008), online: [www.hic-net.org](http://www.hic-net.org).

[104] Kothari, *supra* note 97 at p. 2.

[105] As of April 25, 2008, progress had been made on 704 affordable housing projects representing a total of 11,191 affordable units. Of 9,327 rental and supportive units, there are 3,752 occupied units, 2,324 units under construction and 3,251 units in planning approvals. Of 998 units for homeownership, 781 units are occupied, 53 units are under construction and 164 units are in planning approvals. Of 866 units in the Northern Housing Component, 501 units are occupied, 33 units are under construction/repair and 332 units are in the client selection stage. Government of Ontario, "Affordable Housing," online: [www.mah.gov.on.ca/page126.aspx](http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/page126.aspx).

[106] MMAH indicated that the SCRSP is an important component of the overall provincial housing strategy and that it provides RGI assistance, via service managers, to households in need for both supportive and non-supportive housing units. According to MMAH, the most recent survey of service managers conducted in the fall of 2006 indicated that 6,610 households were assisted under the SCRSP, of which 1,322 were in supportive housing and 5,288 were not. It was also noted that accountability for the SCRSP is shared between the province and municipal service managers, with the province maintaining guidelines for program administration, providing funding and program support to supportive agencies, and municipal service managers delivering the program in accordance with the MOU and program guidelines. Participating landlords enter into rent supplement agreements with municipal service managers to provide rental units to eligible households.



[107] MMAH indicated that funding for this program is \$18.8 million and that service managers are required by provincial rules to evaluate tenant applications on an individual basis by considering their needs and “potential for long term housing.” At the time of MMAH’s submission, this program was being evaluated to determine how the program should be changed in the future. Since then, the Government of Ontario has announced a \$5 million investment in rent banks to help more families stay in their homes. Renters can apply for financial assistance from a rent bank no more than once in two years, and get up to two months help with rent. If a tenant’s application is approved, the outstanding rent is paid directly to the landlord on behalf of the tenant. See Government of Ontario, “Families in Need Get Help with Rent: McGuinty Government Announces Funding for Rent Banks” (May 15, 2008).

[108] For example, the SMHN referred to federal co-operatives, supportive housing administered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ministry of Community and Social Services, housing allowance programs, rent supplement programs, and new affordable housing programs.

[109] See also *Dartmouth/Halifax County Regional Housing Authority v. Sparks*, (1993) 101 D.L.R. (4<sup>th</sup>) 224 (N.S.C.A.) at 234: “As a general proposition, persons who qualify for public housing are the economically disadvantaged and are so disadvantaged because of their age and correspondingly low incomes (seniors) or families with low incomes, a majority of whom are disadvantaged because they are single female parents on social assistance, many of whom are [B]lack. The public housing tenants group as a whole is historically disadvantaged as a result of the combined effect of several personal characteristics listed in s. 15(1).”

[110] In 2006 the government was recommended to make sure that sufficient and adequate community based housing is provided to people with mental disabilities so they are not detained when there is no medical reason for such detention. Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee, *supra* note 17.

[111] Stapleton, J., Metcalf Foundation, *Why is it so tough to get ahead: How our tangled social programs pathologize the transition to self-reliance* (2007) at 29.

[112] *Ibid.* at 19.

[113] Concluding Observations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *supra* note 13 at para. 28.

[114] Ontario Non-Profit Housing Corporation, *Report on the Waiting List Statistics for Ontario* (August 2007), online: [www.onpha.on.ca/english/doc/wait\\_list.pdf](http://www.onpha.on.ca/english/doc/wait_list.pdf).

[115] *Co-operative Corporations Act*, R.S.O 1990, c. C. 35.

[116] *RTA*, *supra* note 29, section 113.

[117] EOLO and FRPO referred the Commission to extensive research, including by Nobel Laureates, on the topic of rent controls.

[118] See for example Golden, Anne, *The Report of the Mayor’s Homelessness Action Task Force: Taking Responsibility for Homelessness* (1999) (*Golden Report*) at 262.



[119] *Ibid.* at 265. See also ACTO, “Quick Facts: Rental Housing in Ontario,” which indicates that “[t]he secondary or non-conventional rental market has been variously estimated to be 589,861 units or 41.3% of the total rental universe and as 894,000 units or 50% of all renter households.” Online: [www.acto.ca/english/acto\\_content.php?topic=7&sub=184](http://www.acto.ca/english/acto_content.php?topic=7&sub=184).

[120] Bill 120, the *Residents Rights Act*, passed in 1994, overrode municipal zoning bylaws and permitted second units in houses, including basement units, as long as health and fire safety standards were met. It provided for a simplified process for enforcement of municipal zoning and property standards. This legislation was accompanied by O. Reg. 285/94 which set out the required safety standards for such units. Bill 20, the *Land Use Planning and Protection Act*, was introduced in 1995. It repealed most of the second unit provisions in the *Residents Rights Act* and re-affirmed municipalities’ ability to decide whether to prohibit basement apartments. This Act has been replaced by the *Planning Act*, R.S.O.1990, c.P.13 which does not address this issue other than to indicate that there is no appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board regarding second unit policies or by-laws regarding two residential units in a detached house, semi-detached house or row-house (subsection 19(1)). See also O. Reg 384/94 “Apartments in Houses.”

[121] See also Urban Development Institute/Ontario, “Beaubien Report Released: Further Changes to Property Assessment System Recommended” (December 2, 2002), online: [www.udiontario.com/issupd/upd021202.htm](http://www.udiontario.com/issupd/upd021202.htm).

[122] Concluding Observations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *supra* note 13 at para 24.

[123] *Ibid.* at para 56.

[124] *Child and Family Services Act (CFSA)*, R.S.O. 1990, c. C. 11.

[125] Miriam Cohen-Schlanger, *et al.*, “Housing as a factor in admissions of children to temporary care: A survey,” *Child Welfare* (May 1995); and Shirley Chau, *et al.*, *One in Five ... Housing as a Factor in the Admission of Children to Care: New Survey of Children's Aid Society of Toronto Updates 1992 Study*, CUCS Research Bulletin #5, University of Toronto (November 2001).

[126] *Kearney supra* note 49.

[127] Concluding Observations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *supra* note 13 at para. 15.

[128] Hulchanski, *supra* note 34

[129] See also the Concluding Observations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *supra* note 13 at para. 29: “The Committee notes with particular concern that many evictions occur on account of minimal arrears of rent, without due consideration of the State party’s obligations under the Covenant.”

[130] Hon. Onley, David, *Moving Forward the Ontario Way* (November 29, 2007), online: [www.premier.gov.on.ca/news/Product.asp?ProductID=1799](http://www.premier.gov.on.ca/news/Product.asp?ProductID=1799). Elements of the announced strategy include boosting the minimum wage to \$10.25 by 2010, increasing child care spaces, providing more affordable housing and fully implementing the new Ontario Child Benefit, raising it to \$1,100

per child.

[131] Affordable housing is a critical component of poverty reduction strategies. The Government of Ontario's website indicates that its long-term strategy for affordable housing will be closely aligned with the poverty reduction plan. It now provides 35,000 new housing allowances and funds more than 18,000 units of affordable housing, online:

[www.growingstronger.ca/en/facts\\_what\\_housing.html](http://www.growingstronger.ca/en/facts_what_housing.html). See also Campaign 2000: End Child and Family Poverty in Canada, *2007 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada – It takes a Nation to Raise a Generation: Time for a National Poverty Reduction Strategy* (Campaign 2000), online: [www.campaign2000.ca/rc/rc07/2007\\_C2000\\_NationalReportCard.pdf](http://www.campaign2000.ca/rc/rc07/2007_C2000_NationalReportCard.pdf).

[132] There were 1.8 million Ontarians below Statistic's Canada's Low Income Cut-off in 2005. Of these, 26% were under 18 (474,000 children), about 9% were adults over age 65 (169,000 seniors), and about 64% were adults between 18 and 64 (1.15 million). Information taken from Shapcott, Michael "Ontario Throne Speech and housing" (November 30, 2007) online: [wellesleyinstitute.com/ontario-throne-speech-and-housing](http://wellesleyinstitute.com/ontario-throne-speech-and-housing).

[133] The CESCR also recommended that the State Party assess the extent to which poverty is a discrimination issue in Canada, and ensure that measures and programmes do not have a negative impact on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, especially for disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups. It would be encouraging to see these kinds of goals built into provincial initiatives aimed at eliminating poverty. Concluding Observations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *supra* note 13 at para. 44. See also Concluding Observations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Canada, U.N. Doc. E/C. 12/1/Add.31 (1998).

[134] The Government of Ontario, *Growing Stronger*, online: [www.ontario.ca/growingstronger](http://www.ontario.ca/growingstronger). This brochure notes that between 2004 and 2006 the Government of Ontario increased social assistance rates by 7% and that the 2008 Budget introduced a further 2% rate increase. The brochure also notes that increases of \$0.75/year will bring the current minimum wage of \$8.75/hour to \$10.25 by 2010.

[135] 76% of ODSP beneficiaries are tenants but only 22% live in subsidized housing. 96% of Ontario Works beneficiaries rent housing but only 17% live in subsidized housing. ACTO Quick Facts, *supra* note 118. See also Statistics and Analysis Unit, Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities Division, Ministry of Community and Social Services, "June 2005 quarterly report of OW/ODSP cases and beneficiaries by accommodation types."

[136] ODSP Action, "Coalition Social Assistance Rates Backgrounder", online: [www.incomesecurity.org/documents/Sabackgrounder.pdf](http://www.incomesecurity.org/documents/Sabackgrounder.pdf).

[137] See for example, Office of Child and Family Service Advocacy, *We are your Sons and Daughters* (June 2007), online: [www.oacas.org/pubs/external/childadvocatereview07june21.pdf](http://www.oacas.org/pubs/external/childadvocatereview07june21.pdf).

[138] Stapleton, John, *supra*, note 110 at 13.

[139] *Ibid.*

[140] See also Ontario Coalition for Social Justice, "Ontario Campaign for Social Justice" (August 2007), online: [www.ocsj.ca/network.php](http://www.ocsj.ca/network.php). See also Campaign 2000, *supra* note 130 – the report notes that "in 2005, 41% of all low income children lived in a family in which one parent was working full time all year, but the family still lived in poverty" at 3.

[141] Government of Ontario, "Ontario's Minimum Wage Increases 2007 – 2010," online: [www.labour.gov.on.ca/info/minimumwage/](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/info/minimumwage/).

[142] While full-time work at a minimum wage of \$10 in 2005 would have been enough to secure an income above the 2005 before-tax Low Income Cut-Off of \$20,778, assuming an inflation rate of 2.1% between 2005 and 2010, this would be equivalent to \$11.10 in 2010. Murray, Stewart and McKenzie, Hugh, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, *Bringing Minimum Wage Above the Poverty Line* (March 2007), online: [www.growinggap.ca/files/Minimum%20Wages%20SUMMARY.pdf](http://www.growinggap.ca/files/Minimum%20Wages%20SUMMARY.pdf).

[143] Income Security Advocacy Centre, "Ontario Needs a Raise Campaign – Minimum Wage Fact Sheet" (February 2005), online: <http://www.incomesecurity.org>.

[144] *Ibid.*

[145] Concluding Observations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *supra* note 13 at paras 11(c), (f), 18, 20, 23 and 28.

[146] A housing allowance is "a government subsidy that reduces the housing costs incurred by a family or individual." Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Housing Allowance Options for Canada* (2006), online: [www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca) at p. 1. This study explores four design options for housing allowance programs.

[147] See for example the *Golden Report*, *supra* note 118 which describes the need for specific strategies to address the needs of high-risk sub-groups such as families with children, youth, abused women, Aboriginal people, immigrants and refugees. *Background Paper*, *supra* note 33 at 50 & 53. See also Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, *Homelessness in Toronto: A Review of the Literature from a Toronto Perspective* (2004) at 1, online: [intraspec.ca/HOMELESSNESS\\_in\\_Toronto.pdf](http://intraspec.ca/HOMELESSNESS_in_Toronto.pdf).

[148] "Individuals of Aboriginal origin account for 35% of the homeless population in Edmonton, 18% in Calgary, 11% in Vancouver and 5% in Toronto, but only 3.8%, 1.9%, 1.7% and 0.4% of the general population of these cities respectively: Stephen Hwang, "Homelessness and Health" (2001) 164(2) CMAJ (online: e:CMAJ <http://www.cmaj.ca/cgi/content/full/164/2/229>).

[149] CAMH referred to Yanos P., Barrow, S. & Tsemberis, S. (2004). "Community integration in the early phase of housing among homeless persons diagnosed with severe mental illness: successes and challenges." *Community Mental Health Journal*, 40(2): 133 – 150. See also the *Golden Report*, *supra* note 118.

[150] The Alliance to End Homelessness said that in 2006, the number of single women using shelters increased by 14.5%, the number of youth using shelters increased by 11.8% and the number of children using shelters increased by 12.4 %, even though the number of families

decreased by 7.9%.

[151] The John Howard Society of Toronto submitted that of the 5,052 people counted in Toronto's Street Needs Assessment survey, 18% had had an "interaction with corrections" and 17% had "had an interaction with probation or parole" in the previous six months. It was also noted that in Sudbury, 9.4% of the 148 people counted as homeless in January 2004 gave "release from jail" as the reason for their homelessness.

[152] See also *Golden Report*, *supra* note 118.

[153] See for example Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Canada, *supra* note 15 and Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Canada, *supra* note 16.

[154] Homeless women between 15-44 were 10 times more likely to die than women in the general population of Toronto. Angela M. Cheung & Stephen W. Hwang, "Risk of death among homeless women: a cohort study and review of literature" (2004) 170(8) CMAJ 1243 at 1245.

[155] Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario, "Homelessness and the Seriously Mentally Ill" (January 31, 2003). See also the *Golden Report*, *supra* note 118 at 119.

[156] *Ibid.* at 112.

[157] Previous reports have noted that decreases in the numbers of rooming houses have been associated with increasing homelessness and have recommended permitting rooming houses as-of-right as part of a homelessness strategy. See for example the *Golden Report*, *supra* note 118 at 179.

[158] See for example, Social Housing Strategies Inc. for the City of Toronto, *Rooming House Issues and Future Options, Background Report 2: Regulation and Licensing of Rooming Houses in the City of Toronto and Other Jurisdictions* (April 2004), online: [www.toronto.ca/housing/pdf/rooming-house-bg-2.pdf](http://www.toronto.ca/housing/pdf/rooming-house-bg-2.pdf) and Social Housing Strategies Inc. for the City of Toronto, *Rooming House Issues and Future Options, Final Report* (April 2004), online: [www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/pdfs/curp/2004\\_Toronto-Rooming-House-Report...](http://www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/pdfs/curp/2004_Toronto-Rooming-House-Report...)

[159] Concluding Observations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *supra* note 13 at para. 28.

[160] *Ibid* at para. 57.

[161] Chief Commissioner Barbara Hall, "Re: Residents angry over housing project," (November 14, 2007), online: [www.ohrc.on.ca](http://www.ohrc.on.ca).

[162] *Ibid.*

[163] Homecoming Community Choice Coalition's cringe test can be accessed online at [www.homecomingcoalition.com/pdfs/iscringetest.pdf](http://www.homecomingcoalition.com/pdfs/iscringetest.pdf).

[164] *Fair Housing Act*, 42 U.S.C. 3601 et seq.

# We Are Neighbours

The Impact of Supportive Housing on Community,  
Social, Economic and Attitude Changes

Prepared by Alice de Wolff

May 2008

## ADVANCED GRANTS

The Wellesley Institute's Advanced Grants programs supports and funds community-based research on housing, health equity, poverty, social exclusion, and other social and economic inequalities as key determinants of health disparities.

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### A Community University Research Project: The Dream Team and the University of Toronto



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We Are Neighbours



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the willing participation and insights of the tenants of the two supportive housing facilities featured in the study, the agency staff that support tenants in these buildings, and their neighbours who all took time to participate in interviews.

The Research Group thanks you all!

*We Are Neighbours* was funded by an Enabling Research Grant and an Advanced Research Grant from the Wellesley Institute.

Copies of this report and related documents can be found online at [wellesleyinstitute.com](http://wellesleyinstitute.com) and [thedreamteam.ca](http://thedreamteam.ca).

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# We Are Neighbours

## *The Impact of Supportive Housing on*

## *Community, Social, Economic and Attitude Changes*

### Executive Summary

Supportive housing makes for great neighbourhoods. That's the conclusion of this important new study of two Toronto supportive housing buildings for people with mental illness, many of whom were previously homeless, and the communities that surround them. As the City of Toronto, along with the Ontario and Canadian governments, work to develop affordable housing strategies, this research shows the important role that supportive housing has to play.

Supportive housing combines bricks-and-mortar with special supports to meet the physical and mental health needs of tenants. These support services allow people to live independently in the community. People who live in supportive housing know its value. Members of the Dream Team, who conducted this research project, have been engaged for several years in telling their personal stories about how supportive housing has been – almost literally – a life-saver.

But what about the impact of supportive housing on the surrounding neighbourhood? Almost inevitably, when a new supportive housing project is proposed concerns will be raised about “those people” and the impact of “that project” on community safety, cohesion and property values.

The Dream Team set out to test the value of supportive housing through a community-based research process that brought together supportive housing residents, housing providers and their neighbours. They used public data to show that supportive housing does not hurt property values or increase crime. But their interviews go further, to show that supportive housing tenants make important contributions to the strength of their neighbourhoods. Tenants contribute a modest amount to local businesses (most residents are not particularly wealthy, so their economic footprint is not large); they add to the vibrancy of an area through their street presence; they participate in the friendliness amongst neighbours; and they contribute to the collective efficacy of their neighbourhoods through actions around noise and speed, tidiness and crime.

In short, supportive housing residents are just the kind of great neighbours that every community needs.

## Key Findings

Property values and crime rates are unaffected

- There is no evidence that the existence of the supportive housing buildings studied has negatively affected either property values or crime rates in the neighbourhood. Property values have increased and crime decreased in the period considered by the study.

Neighbours do not think the Buildings have a negative impact

- Of the 54 immediate neighbours and business people interviewed, only two business people claimed that the houses have a negative impact. They were also the business people with the least experience in the neighbourhood. Only 40% of residential neighbours and business people knew that the buildings were even supportive housing facilities. The opposition that existed to the houses when they were proposed has dissipated, with virtually no expression of negative attitudes found among immediate neighbours.

Modest local economic “footprint”

- Interviews with neighbours and 36 tenants and staff of both buildings indicate that the local economic “footprint” of each building is modest, primarily because of tenants’ low income. However, because they tend to have fewer choices than people with higher incomes, they shop at local convenience stores, pharmacies, coffee shops and restaurants. Some local store operators recognize the importance of tenants’ business by offering them small amounts of short-term credit.

Contributions to neighbourhood actions and vibrancy

- The study found that each building contributes to the strength of their local neighbourhoods in different ways, depending on the length of time they have been open and the character of the street.
  - Building A has been on a residential street for almost 20 years. Tenants have initiated a new approach to front yard gardening on the street and participated in collective action with their neighbours around noise and speed reduction, and garbage removal
  - Building B is on the commercial side of a mixed-use street. Tenants have stronger relationships with business operators than with residential neighbours, and have created an important, new vibrancy along what was a drab section of the street.

Contributions and crime

- Tenants in Building B in particular have experienced being targets for criminal activity. Tenants and staff in both buildings have developed internal ways to handle crime that protects both tenants and the neighbourhood.

## Recommendations

The Research Group has a series of recommendations for the three levels of government and for others with a stake in creating both more supportive housing and successful neighbourhoods:

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### City of Toronto

Current City planning approval practices create regulatory hurdles that make it more difficult for supportive housing projects to move ahead. While planning law requires that proper planning principles should consider buildings and physical design only and not the personal characteristics of potential residents, planning practice has often allowed opponents to engage in questions about the economic or health status of future residents.

The cumbersome regulatory process creates unacceptable delays that can, in some cases, defeat plans for new supportive housing. Supportive housing projects sometimes require approvals from a variety of authorities, in addition to planning approvals.

Toronto's proposed 10-year housing plan which was launched in 2007 sets no specific target for new supportive housing. Dr. Anne Golden recommended 1,000 new supportive homes every year as part of the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force of 1999. The Wellesley Institute's Blueprint to End Homelessness in Toronto in 2006 set an annual target of 2,000 supportive homes based on the latest data.

#### The City of Toronto should:

1. Act on the strong research evidence that shows that supportive housing facilities are not harmful to neighbourhoods, and that they contribute to strong communities. The City should apply "as-of-right" planning rules to supportive housing, and recognize that supportive housing is a necessary part of every neighbourhood by setting targets for all parts of the city.
2. Create a streamlined, "single window" approach that assigns projects to senior city staff who are responsible for securing the necessary approvals.
3. Ensure that all planning and zoning are neighborhood building processes and recognize that housing is a human right for everyone.
4. Establish clear supportive housing targets as part of its 10-year housing strategy.



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## Government of Ontario

For more than a decade, provincial funding for supportive housing has been fractured among several ministries and departments. Much of the provincial responsibility for new affordable housing has been downloaded to municipalities, but without the financial support for new development. The Ontario government is downloading support services funded through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to newly created Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs). Not only has provincial funding for housing and services been inadequate, but fragmentation has created further obstacles for supportive housing providers.

The Government of Ontario should:

5. Act on its key funding responsibility and set specific targets for supportive housing in Toronto and other communities in the context of an overall housing strategy.
6. Make adequate funding available to meet those targets, and ensure that its funding flows through programs that ensure the housing and supports are properly coordinated at the local level.
7. Fund “portable” services that meet the needs of individuals who have a mental illness or disability but do not live in supportive housing.
8. Ensure that curriculum in schools and programs for mental health professionals, social workers, community workers, urban planners and all other related professions should include sections on the research related to mental health and housing.

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## Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs)

As LHINs take on the responsibility for funding supportive housing there is a danger that supportive housing service requirements will be forced to compete with a variety of other unmet health needs in local communities for a limited pool of provincial funding. Each of Ontario’s LHINs must recognize the assets that supportive housing can bring to neighbourhoods.

In recent years, provincial supportive housing funding has tended to support larger supportive housing providers, presumably in the interest of administrative efficiency. While the big providers deserve support, funding programs should also recognize that small providers often provide services and meet a unique need and also deserve support.

Local Health Integration Networks should:

9. Ensure that their funding policies and practices are integrated with municipal and provincial supportive housing programs.
  10. Be responsive to neighbourhood needs and recognize the unique contributions of a range of providers, from large to small agencies.
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## Government of Canada

The federal government's newly-created Mental Health Commission of Canada was launched with the promise that it would address, among other concerns, the critical issue of mental health and housing. Before the funding cuts and downloading of the 1990s, the federal government played a key role in housing funding. Canada now stands alone among developed countries in lacking a national housing strategy that would include supportive housing. In 2005, federal, provincial and territorial housing ministers promised that they were working towards a new Canadian housing framework, but progress has been stalled since then.

The federal government has provided some funding for pilot projects in several communities. Pilot projects can provide useful lessons, but Toronto and Canada have plenty of successful models of supportive housing. Long-term funding for housing and supports are needed, not more pilot projects.

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11. The federal government should establish a country-wide housing strategy that include specific targets for Toronto and other communities, and make adequate funding available to meet those targets.
  12. The Mental Health Commission of Canada must include studies of the contributions that supportive housing makes to their neighbourhoods in the Commission's campaign to eliminate stigma and discrimination against people with mental illness, and in the Commission's knowledge exchange initiatives.

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## Supportive Housing Providers

13. The design and programming in supportive housing should foster or strengthen several successful approaches: an atmosphere of support and security, internal communities among tenants, child and pet friendly spaces and openness to the neighbourhood. This study indicates that gardens are important, along with porches, benches, patios and community-use rooms.
14. Housing providers should foster or strengthen a community liaison or community development function within their organizations, and support tenants who want to participate in neighbourhood-building actions and community organizations (such as a neighbourhood watch).

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## Community Organizations

15. Community leaders, including those in community associations and business organizations, should take an active role in building strong neighbourhoods by engaging supportive housing providers and tenants in their work. They should work to promote the assets that supportive housing tenants can bring to a neighbourhood.

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## Supportive Housing Tenants

16. Get involved and stay involved! Supportive housing tenants know, first hand, the value of supportive housing in their lives. The Research Group encourages tenants to use this study to validate their experience that supportive housing is good for communities.

## Challenges and Opportunities in Supportive Housing Policy

	Challenges	Opportunities
<b>City of Toronto</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No specific supportive housing targets</li> <li>• No inclusionary planning policies for supportive housing.</li> <li>• No “as-of-right” zoning for supportive housing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Toronto’s proposed 10-year housing plan acknowledges the value of supportive housing</li> <li>• TO housing plan consultation process is an opportunity to develop specific targets</li> </ul>
<b>Government of Ontario</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No specific supportive housing targets</li> <li>• No dedicated supportive housing funding</li> <li>• Funding for housing and services fragmented</li> <li>• No overall provincial housing strategy</li> <li>• Support services funding being downloaded to LHINs; housing funding was downloaded to municipalities in 1998.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ontario’s promise of a comprehensive Poverty Reduction Strategy offers opportunity to develop supportive housing plan</li> <li>• Ontario is currently considering a provincial housing strategy</li> <li>• “Health equity” focus at LHINs and Ministry of Health and Long Term Care allows for new focus on supportive housing</li> </ul>
<b>Government of Canada</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No specific supportive housing targets</li> <li>• No dedicated supportive housing funding</li> <li>• Latest announcement is for “pilot project” funding only, not for permanent housing / services funding</li> <li>• Three major national housing and homelessness programs set to expire in 2008.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newly created Mental Health Commission of Canada recognizes important of housing as a critical mental health issue</li> <li>• Federal government has a long history of successful housing programs</li> </ul>

# We Are Neighbours

## The Impact of Supportive Housing on Community, Social, Economic and Attitude Changes

### 1. Motivation For The Study

A common objection to proposals for new supportive housing facilities is that their presence will be harmful to the existing community. This study interviewed tenants, staff and neighbours of two supportive housing facilities in Toronto, Ontario, in order to understand their impact on the social and economic health of immediate neighbourhoods, the attitudes of neighbours to the facilities, and how these attitudes have changed over time.

Varied sources have identified a need for more supportive housing facilities for people with mental illness in Toronto, a city region of about five million people. Today only about 3,000 supportive housing units exist in the city, supported by over 30 agencies (Roberts 2006). Mental health and housing agencies estimate that another six thousand people with mental illness have been unable find homes in supportive facilities<sup>1</sup>. The Wellesley Institute's *Blueprint to End Homelessness in Toronto* estimates an annual need of 2,000 additional supportive housing units for a wide range of people with physical and mental illness (Wellesley Institute 2006).

In this study the term "supportive housing" is used to refer to affordable, quality housing for people with mental health issues that ensures:

- Secure tenure, protected under the Residential Tenancy Act
- Integration in the community
- Choice of housing
- Choice and flexibility of support
- Independence and privacy.

<sup>1</sup> This figure is the professional estimate of Steve Lurie, Canadian Mental Health Association (private conversation, 03/07/08). A formal registry of people with mental illness who need supportive housing in Toronto is in the process of being developed.

There is an immediate need for research evidence to support advocacy and policy that guides the development of supportive housing. The City of Toronto is considering a ten-year housing strategy that includes a commitment to supportive housing, but more detailed planning is required to turn this into a reality. The Provincial government is just beginning public consultations on a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy and an affordable housing plan, both of which include a commitment to supportive housing but few details. A significant portion of the provincial funds for supportive housing is now being directed through the Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs), and these are just beginning to grapple with supportive housing strategy. The provincial and city budgets provide some funds for supportive housing, but their initiatives rely substantially on transfers from three federal government programs – the affordable housing program, the national housing rehabilitation program and the national homelessness initiative – all of which expire in 2008. The federal government has promised a one-time infusion of \$110 million for mental health and housing pilot projects across the country in 2008, but because there is no commitment beyond that, these funds cannot be used to sustain services over time.

Most supportive housing facilities that have been built in Toronto in the past decade continue have been met by community concerns about their local impact. One study opens by describing recent Toronto public meetings about the development of supportive housing as “‘ugly’, ‘terrible’, and ‘offensive’”, with frequent violations of the human rights of future tenants (Ross 2007). The strength and persistence of NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) concerns in Toronto has provided the second motivation for conducting a current study in this city. Community level opposition to new facilities is often organized around a short list of fears about potential negative impacts on local businesses and neighbours that focus on property values, crime, traffic congestion and noise disruptions (Hill 1993). The much broader experience of actual interactions between people who live close to existing supportive housing facilities and tenants is rarely sought even anecdotally, and has only rarely been studied systematically. Consequently the Dream Team Research Group decided to look at neighbourhoods immediately surrounding two supportive housing buildings in order to find and examine indicators of the buildings’ local economic and social impact.

This project is unique in that it has been planned and conducted by a research group made up of members of the Dream Team, representatives of project partner agencies, a community-based research consultant and a University of Toronto professor. The Dream Team members are men and women who live in supportive housing who work together to advocate for more supportive housing. Their advocacy work brings them into new endeavors, and they are excited about breaking through their own and others’ assumptions about what they can accomplish.



.....is a group of men and women who live with mental illness, other users of supportive housing and family members, many of whom have been homeless. Dream Team members demonstrate the life-altering benefits of supportive housing by telling their stories to politicians, community groups, schools, faith groups and other institutions. They strive, through presentations, workshops and research, to have more supportive housing available in Ontario for people living with mental illness.

This was the third motivation for the project – Dream Team members not only wanted current research that systematically addressed the claims made by opponents of supportive housing but they also wanted to challenge themselves to develop objective research skills and new sets of project planning skills. The group’s more experienced researchers have been challenged to facilitate and support research planning and implementation processes that involve and respect the perspectives and expertise of each research group member. The result is that a unique perspective has informed this project, one that is not readily found in other research. It has caused us to be interested in more than the usual measures of the social and economic impact of supportive housing (crime and property values), and to include in this study the possible contributions that supportive housing and its tenants make to their neighbourhoods.

A recent review of studies on supportive housing recommends:

“...the involvement of consumers in partnerships with researchers, mutually deciding both the goals and methods of research, to ensure that the products of research are directly relevant and are true to the concerns and experiences of consumers. A final implication is for research that more effectively documents consumers’ own values for their housing and their own lived experiences.” (Sylvestre 2007).



## 2. Research Background

Although few studies document the social and economic impacts of supportive housing on surrounding communities, other social scientific research has identified what indicators make for healthy communities. In both our interviews and secondary data collection we have focused on assessing social and economic cohesion, and tenants' contributions to those aspects of their communities.

The limited academic research on the impact of supportive housing focuses on the quality of and length of stay of tenants, and the relative value of different programs. One review found that once people with serious mental illnesses are in supportive housing, they stay there and are less likely to be hospitalized (Rog 2004). Nelson's (2007) more recent review of U.S. studies makes similar observations: people with mental illness remain stable in supported situations, case management alone is not as effective as when it is combined with housing, those in supportive housing programs had a higher quality of housing than those in treatment programs that did not include housing (Nelson 2007).

The reviews by Rog and Nelson indicate consistent reduction of health care costs that are attributable to supportive housing, which is itself a significant macro economic impact. Tenants in supportive housing are far less likely than comparison groups to use hospitals and other institutions (Lipton 1988; Drake 1997; Anderson 1999; Rosenheck 2003; Tsemberis 2004; Nelson 2007). In Ontario, at least three community health and housing agencies have tracked the reduction in hospital use by people in supportive housing and have begun to quantify this impact. The Frontenac Community Health Services in Kingston reported that tenants use of hospitals fell by 60% over eight years; in Waterloo the hospital use among 120 tenants dropped by 89% over the first year they entered supportive housing facilities; in Toronto the Canadian Mental Health Association followed 56 tenants whose hospital costs dropped from \$1.4 million to \$173,000 – a decline of 87.3% from when they started receiving support in 2002 (Goar 2005).

Other studies have gone further to make the macro economic case for supportive housing. Most notably, a recent study in British Columbia has shown that the combination of health care, jail and emergency shelter costs for people who are homeless, many of who have mental illness, are much higher than the costs of supportive housing. It calculates that housing and full support for each homeless person would cost the province 67% of its current spending on this population (Patterson 2008).

In this study we did not replicate these cost-benefit studies. However, because of the persistent public concerns about negative effects on property values, we did examine real estate records to gain some sense of economic consequences. In brief, like other urban planning researchers and policy makers who have examined property values surrounding group homes and supportive housing in a wide variety of communities over the past 20 years, we found no negative impact. A particularly extensive study in Denver found that scattered, smaller facilities did not negatively affect property values, and that smaller, well maintained facilities established on run-down properties tended to increase property

values (Galster 2003). Other studies have found no impact on property values of public non-profit and supportive housing, including a recent review conducted by reporters in Vancouver (Culbert 2008), two in Toronto (Boydell 1986; Smith 1992), one commissioned by the British Columbia government (Collingwood and Associates 1995), and a review of fifteen studies of group home projects in the U.S. (Martinez 1988). Another review of nine supportive housing facilities in Pennsylvania reported property value increases in all related neighbourhoods (Anderson 1999).

Fewer studies have examined the next persistent concern: that neighbourhood safety will suffer and crime rates will increase because of supportive housing facilities. The most comprehensive study of this type of neighbourhood impact found that smaller facilities in Denver were not associated with increased rates of reported violent property damage, criminal mischief, disorderly conduct or total crimes. It did find an increased incidence of crime in the immediate vicinity of larger facilities (those with 53 or more tenants). The authors observed however, that tenants in these facilities were not perpetrators of crime, but rather provided a pool of potential victims (Galster 2002). A recent B.C. review of police complaints related to supportive housing facilities reported no increase that could be attributed to these facilities, and in fact a very low rate of such calls (Culbert 2008).

In the early 1990s a number of studies used stated community concerns to develop indicators of neighbourhood impact. A Toronto study of three new supportive housing facilities used questions about the design and attractiveness of a facility, building maintenance, noise and disruption, and traffic congestion (Hill 1993). Hill's research team found very little negative impact (85% reported no concern about noise and disruptions, and 81% had no safety concerns related to the facility). Their more dramatic finding was how few immediate neighbours (55%) actually knew about the nature of the facility. A North Virginia study of group homes found similar results: very few neighbours with concerns and a remarkable number of immediate neighbours with no awareness of the nature of the facility (Wahl 1993). A New York study of the attitudes of neighbours surrounding a group home found a striking turn-around in a two-year period. Many of these neighbours had actively opposed the home but had quickly become very accepting, and felt that the tenants of the group home were good neighbours (Arens 1993).

No studies to our knowledge have examined the social and economic relationships between supportive housing tenants and their residential and commercial neighbours. Galster used the idea of collective efficacy in observing the extent to which facilities contribute to or impede crime (Galster 2002). In its broadest sense, the concept of collective efficacy captures the extent to which mutual trust and solidarity between neighbours can lead a local individual or group to intervene for the common good of the community as a whole. Some markers of the health and functioning of neighbourhoods can be the presence or absence of disorder and disuse (crime, run down properties, noise, street presence of drugs and prostitution, garbage, etc.). But the pre-condition of whether such markers are obvious in a neighbourhood tends to be whether neighbours have the capacity to act effectively to remove causes and signs of disorder (Sampson 1997; Sampson 1999). In this study we have used the idea of collective efficacy to look

at the extent to which tenants and neighbours interactions can be understood to contribute to the well-being, safety and health of their neighbourhood.

Research on the dimensions of strong neighbourhoods has further suggested an interconnected set of four indicators that we have used to consider tenants' participation in their neighbourhoods. These studies indicate that strong neighbourhoods require:

- **Inclusion** – active community involvement; democratic processes; strong sense of belonging; a welcoming community; respect for diversity; tolerance of differences.
- **Vibrancy** – an active street life (e.g. cafes, shops and services); opportunities for community interaction (e.g. street festivals); a strong sense of 'place identity' and pride.
- **Cohesion** – a sense of mutual responsibility and strong bonds of reciprocity (e.g. neighbours looking out for each other's children); trust (e.g. not having to worry about locking doors); and negotiated solutions to conflicts.
- **Safety** – both subjective feelings of safety (people feeling they can go anywhere, feeling comfortable in public), as well as objective measures of safety (e.g. freedom from crime, absence of pollutants and contaminants, safe buildings). (Freiler 2004).

### 3. Data and Methods

The project began with an inclusive series of workshops that sharpened the research focus, reviewed research methods and familiarized the whole research team with existing literature. An Enabling Grant from the Wellesley Institute made these workshops possible. The team then conducted the full project, collecting primary data in the form of interviews, and analyzing secondary data from time-series of property values, crime reports, and demographic profiles of the neighbourhoods.

#### 3.1 Selecting Buildings A and B

After surveying the literature on supportive housing impacts, the project team sought to identify two supportive housing facilities and neighbourhoods for this study. The main constraints in identifying facilities were finding two that (i) were located in the same community, (ii) were distinctive in their history and integration into the community, (iii) were opposed by the community when proposed, and (iv) could be studied with the cooperation of tenants and supporting agencies. The project team reviewed information from more than twenty potential facilities and conducted interviews with agency managers to gauge potential fit for our study. A key issue was raised during this process about how to interview residential and business neighbours without bringing the facility to the attention of a potentially biased but unknowing community, and how to protect the privacy of tenants. After a substantial amount of work to ensure that all research efforts would meet our criteria and satisfy this concern, the Research Group selected two facilities in a neighbourhood adjacent to downtown Toronto. Building A and Building B are ideal because they are quite different facilities with very different histories. Building A was a twenty year-old facility with fifteen units, sited on a residential street where there had been some opposition but no formal hearings. Building B was a two year-old, twenty six unit facility located on a busy commercial street. There had been active opposition to this building.

#### 3.2 Developing The Interviews

The detailed interview scripts and schedules for tenants and staff were developed in an intensive workshop process with the Research Group. The resulting open-ended questionnaires reflected the supportive housing experience of the team members and were rigorously examined for whether the questions would make sense to tenants. The questions ask for respondents' observations about the neighbourhood, and about interactions with neighbours. After a four-month period of designing, planning and training, Dream Team members conducted the interviews in pairs or with a more experienced researcher. Team members' empathy with tenants, their very practical interest in people's responses and familiarity with the details and language of supportive housing made it possible for many of these interviews to become more like conversations, rather than question and answer sessions.

....planning, interviewing and meeting support were areas of my strengths and continued to grow during the project. I think I learned to listen better, more empathetically and become empowered to help others (the team, tenants) become empowered. (Esther)

The development of neighbour and business interviews was similar, producing a short, closed-form fixed survey as well as open-ended questions. The agencies involved were concerned that the research process itself would not ignite community concern about the buildings, what Galster describes as that potential for “socially destructive experimenter effect” (Galster 2002). Consequently the neighbour and business interviews used a two stage process, starting with general questions about the neighbourhood and attitudes towards public housing, then a screening question that provided respondents with an opportunity to identify the building, and on to more specific questions only if the respondent knew the building. Fliers delivered in the week before the interviews took place notified neighbours and businesses that interviewers would be knocking on their doors. Our team’s interviewers were not “insiders” in these interviews, and were potentially at risk of being on the receiving end of direct anger, or of hearing negative opinions. We prepared with sessions about how to handle difficult interviews and provided on-site support and debriefing for interviewers.

Before we did the door-to-door interviews, I was a bit worried. I was at those community meetings before it was built, and knew what some people on this street had opposed the building. I didn’t know if I could handle someone who was angry or who had NIMBY attitudes. But everyone we spoke with was very polite with us. (Phillip).

Because of the ethnic composition of the neighbourhood, the fliers and interview schedules for neighbours and businesses were translated into Chinese, and three Chinese interpreters were added to the team.

The part of the study I liked the most was doing the interviews with my Chinese partner. She was really nice, and people liked talking to her. (Dennis).

Group interviews were conducted toward the end of the study with tenants and staff from both buildings in order to review the study’s primary findings, to update our information and ask for feedback about the accuracy of our observations.

That was the most amazing session! I don’t know of any other research that would check back with the tenants like this. That meeting had so much energy, and several people offered to help us publicize the report. (Mark).

All interviewees were guaranteed confidentiality in this study. This is particularly important because the privacy of those in supportive housing is important, and consequences of publicly identifying individuals as having mental illness can still be harsh. Further, the number of tenants in supportive housing is not large, and individuals needed to be assured that their information would not be shared within the community. Consequently the neighbourhood is not named, and details that might specifically identify the neighbourhood have been omitted from this report. The buildings are not specifically identified, and individuals are not referred to by their real names. Tenants, neighbours and businesses were offered honoraria for their participation.



Front Porch Interview, June 2007



### 3.3 Interview Respondents

In the summer of 2006, all tenants of each facility were given an invitation to participate in the study. Flyers in each facility and personal communication from the facility staff also advertised the study. In September ten of fourteen tenants of Building A responded to a flyer and agreed to be interviewed. Interested tenants in Building B attended an information session – a process that was made possible by a relatively large common space in the building – at the end of which thirteen of twenty-four tenants agreed to an interview. We also interviewed five Building A staff, and five Building B staff.

The residential and business neighbours were interviewed in June 2007. Neighbours interviewed lived within one block of Building A (n=14) and Building B (n=24). The businesses interviewed (n=14) were within a five to ten minute walk from both buildings. We also interviewed staff at a local community support agency near Building A, and staff at a school next door to Building B.

### 3.4 Introduction to Building A

Building A has been in existence since the late 1980s, and was one of the first supportive, independent housing facilities for people with mental illness in Toronto. It was built for this purpose, with fifteen bachelor apartments on three floors plus the basement, with laundry facilities and a small common room in the basement. Its exterior was designed to fit a residential street, with sizable front and back yards that are similar to those of other homes. The street is tree-lined with a mixture of small single story row homes, attached and detached two story brick homes, and new in-fill single-family three-story homes. It is a single block long, with a major traffic thoroughfare at one end and a commercial street at the other. When the building was built, the character of the street was predominantly working class, but it has begun to gentrify in the last decade. Tenants come from shelters and insecure private housing, and have become long-term, stable residents: one tenant has lived there since the building opened; three had been there for eleven years; the most recent tenants had moved in at least two years before the study. Seventy percent of tenants were male, thirty percent were female, and their average age was 50.

The development of this property met the criteria for the official plan for the neighbourhood and did not require any zoning changes, which meant that it proceeded with no formal hearings. During the planning and construction, agency staff and board members went door to door on the street to inform neighbours about the nature of the building. They anticipated negative reactions, and while there were some concerns, no one made a complaint to city council and many neighbours were pleased about changes to a run down property. The concern they met with most frequently was that there would be no live-in staff at the building. A staff member remembers that they met that concern with, "... discussions about our agency's commitment to independent living." (Marion, 22/11/06). A grand opening was held after tenants moved in, with 200 people gathered in

the back yard, including the Minister of Housing and the Mayor. After the open house the agency did not hold other events to foster relationships between neighbours and tenants.

Because of its size and the initiatives of both the agency and tenants, Building A has a culture that is more like cooperative housing than a standard rental apartment building. Tenants are aware of each other's concerns and habits, and while there are what many describe as the usual interpersonal difficulties, several said they rely on their fellow tenants for support when they have problems. There are a couple of particularly articulate activists in this building who have provided initiative and leadership. In the summer tenants organize barbeques for the each other in the back yard, and these events have given birth to a tenants' association.

### 3.5 Introduction to Building B

Building B is a low-rise apartment building that was created in the early 2000s. The property had been used as a mixed living space and small factory, and required a major renovation. It has 26 apartments on two floors, disabled access to both floors, a rooftop sitting area, laundry, a front office and a large common room with cooking facilities. The exterior is clean and new, with little indication that its use is either residential or commercial from the outside. The front foyer opens directly onto the street, and there is no street-level open space on the property. It is located between the front gardens of a junior high school and a cluster of small storefront offices and businesses. The street is a busy thoroughfare, on a transit route, with several apartment buildings, the school and small businesses on the same side of the street as Building B, and homes on the opposite side. Most tenants moved into the building from shelters, and had lived in the building since it had opened. They were a slightly younger group than Building A tenants, with an average age of 43. A number of the tenants were employed.

The neighbourhood's revitalization committee has encouraged higher density residential development along this street as a way to revitalize and upgrade areas that need improvement. The property had been slated to become a condo but that project had been unable to provide sufficient parking for the proposed use. The Building B proposal required only minor variances to the existing zoning. The minor variances still meant, however, that the approval process had to be public. The agency sent their plans to the city's Committee of Adjustment, neighbours were notified and public hearings were held. The two meetings that took place were, from the accounts of those who attended, very acrimonious. A neighbourhood community association opposed the development, with one or two immediate neighbours acting as primary spokespersons. One argument was that the neighbourhood already had too many social housing projects, and that the neighbourhood was becoming a ghetto of social housing. They were also critical of the design of the building itself, the size of the units and the proximity to the school (although no one from the school supported these objections). Eventually the objections dissipated into a weak presentation to the Committee of Adjustment, and the development was

approved. The agency held an open house after tenants moved in, and invited immediate neighbours although very few attended.

## 4. Changes in the Neighbourhood

### 4.1 Recent History

The study's two buildings are located in a neighbourhood adjacent to the downtown core. Over the last several decades the neighbourhood has been in a transition from one that was home to a substantial number of manufacturing plants and their workers, to a higher cost residential area with new pockets of cultural industry, small retail businesses and big box stores. There is less employment in the neighbourhood, but there are new advantages in housing that is close to the city's core. One of its challenges is that its industries still release one of the highest concentrations of toxins of any ward in the city (Toronto Environmental Alliance 2006).



A revitalization committee has promoted the intensification of its residential population along the neighbourhood's four or five main streets through zoning that encourages street level business with residential spaces on second and third stories, the preservation of historic architecture, and the redevelopment of industrial sites and buildings for residential use (Revitalization Committee 2002).

## 4.2 Changes In Demographic Profile

Census data provides a number of important descriptions of changes in the neighbourhood over the past few years.

- The number of people living in the neighbourhood decreased by 9.1% between 2001 and 2006.
- The population is older: the proportion of young children age 14 and younger living in the neighbourhood decreased from 16% in 2001 to 14% 2006. The proportions of people aged 20 to 39 dropped, and the proportions of those between age 40 and 64 increased in this same period.
- Over one third of the population was Chinese in 2001. It is one of the city's destination points for new immigrants: in 2006 between 18% and 24% of the area's immigrants had arrived recently.
- Households had higher income: the proportion of households with income less than \$20,000 a year dropped from 32% in 1996 to 22% in 2001. The proportion of households with incomes over \$100,000 increased from 7% to 12.4%.
- The proportion of residences that were owned increased from 49% in 1996 to 54% in 2001, with the parallel decrease in rental units from 51% in 1996 to 46% in 2001. (City of Toronto 2008; City of Toronto 2008).

## 4.3 Changes in Crime

The data we reviewed provides no indication that Building B has been associated with an increase in crime. Rates of violent crime have consistently dropped across the city since the mid-1990s, and the same is generally true for this neighbourhood. We have used the Toronto Police Services crime rate data, which is only available for the last ten years. Consequently this analysis is relevant only to the introduction of Building B, which took place in the early 2000s. In the ten-year period between 1997 and 2006 the volume of dispatched calls dropped by 27%. Incidents of sexual assault were down 32% from their highest point in 2001; incidents of other assault were down 11.5%, also from their highest point in 2001. Breaking and entering, robbery, theft under \$5,000 and motor vehicle theft all had their highest rates in 1997. Only three types of crime increased and reached a peak in 2004 – 2005: theft over \$5,000, fraud and weapons offences (Toronto Police Service 1997 - 2006). These are crimes in which tenants are least likely to be involved. The details of these figures can be found in Table 1. Crack cocaine is considered the most popular street drug in Toronto, in part because of its relatively low prices (City of Toronto 2005). Our interviews indicated that it was readily available in this neighbourhood, however, crime related to its use remains undocumented.

## 4.4 Changes in Property Values: Building A's Street

There is no evidence to suggest that Building A has affected the real estate values of its neighbours. Property values on Building A's street have paralleled the fluctuations in the

Toronto real estate market between 1988 and 2007, and do not differ significantly from those of an adjacent street. The information about the adjacent street is included here only as a comparison of trends, not as a specific comparison of values. The original housing stock is similar on the two streets, but they are not directly comparable: Building A's street has houses on both sides with one-way through traffic; the adjacent street is a cul de sac, with housing on one side and an open green space and a small manufacturing property on the other. The values of houses across from the green space on the adjacent street tend to be slightly higher than those on Building A's street. A fire in the early 2000s destroyed houses very close to Building A, and they have now been replaced by large new detached and semi-detached homes.

Charts 1, 2 and 3 show annual averages of sold prices for the three different types of housing from 1988 to 2007. Housing prices dropped dramatically across the city between 1989 and 1992 and have climbed relatively steadily since the mid-1990s. Average sold prices on the two streets reflect these city wide trends. Chart 1 indicates that the value of row or town homes has increased more dramatically on Building A's street (an increase of 262%, compared with 134% on the comparison street). Chart 2 shows that the value of semi-detached homes has been consistency higher on the adjacent street, with a couple of exceptions for particularly extensive renovations in 2003 and 2006. Chart 3 shows that the value of detached homes was consistently higher on Building A's street until 2007 and the sale of two newly renovated homes across from the green space on the adjacent street.

#### 4.5 Changes in Property Values: Building B's Street

The value of residential property on Building B's street has increased substantially since the early 2000's and does not significantly differ from those of an adjacent street. There is no indication that Building B has negatively affected property values. The two streets we compare here for residential values are very close to each other: both are on transit routes, with residences on one side facing a school and a small businesses section at the corner. The residences on both streets are primarily semi-detached and row or town houses. Detached houses are not included in this analysis because the sample is too small: only four detached homes sold on Building B's street in this period, and none on the adjacent street. Charts 4 and 5 show a consistent increase in average annual sales for row or town houses and for semi-detached houses on both streets from 2002 – 2008.

We also reviewed sales of stores with offices or apartments on the second floor on Building B's street in the same six-year period. Only eight had sold and the nature of these properties varied considerably, making it difficult to see any trend. Their sold prices varied between \$250,000 and \$920,000.



## 5. Economic Footprints And Relations With Neighbourhood Businesses

The two buildings are close enough that tenants from both are able to use the same businesses. Consequently, here we present the observations related to both buildings together, first from the perspective of the business people we interviewed, and then from the perspective of the tenants and staff.

### 5.1 Neighbourhood Businesses: Impact of Supportive Housing

We surveyed the businesses that were most likely to be used by tenants on two main streets close to both houses. We interviewed fourteen people who were either proprietors or employees, half of whom had owned or worked in their location for twenty years or more. The businesses were convenience stores, pet stores, dollar stores, bakeries, a bank branch, coffee shops and small restaurants.

Table 2 reports our findings of the business interviews, showing that as a group, these respondents were slightly more cautious about changes in the neighbourhood than immediate residential neighbours of the buildings. Two of these people were the only ones we spoke with who thought that neighbourhood property values had gone down. This perception could have been related to the concerns raised by several other store managers about increased taxes or rent on their storefront properties. Their assessment of the quality of their businesses colleagues in the neighbourhood was less generous than that of residential neighbours. Their comments suggested that this reflected concerns about their own business, about fewer businesses serving a particular language or ethnic group, and/or the closure of manufacturing plants in the neighbourhood. On the more positive side, they were more likely than our residential respondents to say that the extent to which they knew their neighbours had increased, that they helped each other more than they used to, and that neighbourhood crime had decreased.

Only 42% of the business people we spoke with knew of Building A or Building B. Table 3 shows that their assessment of the influence of tenants on neighbourhood changes was polarized. This chart reports on typical NIMBY opinions: for instance, 'supportive housing contributes to lower property values' or 'lowers the quality of businesses and services'. While this was a small sample, we found it notable that a few of the business people voiced the most negative opinions that we found in the door-to-door interviews. We also noticed that these respondents were among the newest to the neighbourhood. Those who thought that property values had gone down also thought that supportive housing had contributed to the decline. They were also the only people in the study who thought that tenants contributed to an increase in crime.



This opinion was countered by others, including those with over twenty years of experience in the area, who said that the buildings contributed to an increase in property values, an increase in the quality of businesses, and to a decrease in crime.

## 5.2 Tenants: Neighbourhood Economic Footprint, Building A

In our interviews, Building A's tenants and staff described how they made contributions to the local economy. Tenants all live on very limited incomes so their ability to spend is not large, but perhaps more than other neighbours with higher incomes and wider choices of locations to shop, they use the local restaurants, coffee shops, bakery, butcher, dollar store, pharmacy, pet store and convenience stores for small purchases. Tenants tend to do their monthly shopping at a low cost supermarket several blocks from the building. Their use of local stores contributes both to individual businesses and to the regular street life and vibrancy of the neighbourhood.

One or two convenience store operators know individuals well enough to provide them with small monthly credit, and a story about one store where staff went out of their way to assist a tenant with physical disabilities.

At [convenience store] some people can go in there and get accounts if they're short. I used to go in there with a woman once a week, and the people who worked in the store, all she would have to do is stand at a point and they would get everything for her. She would say 'I need this, I need that, I need this' and the guy in the store would go get everything for her, pack it, tie it up in the bag, put it in her bundle buggy and all she had to do is pay the bill. (Mika 22/11/06).

The pet store operator not only sells to tenants, but she acts as a source of advice and support when there are problems. Family members and support workers take tenants to local coffee places, and sometimes to the restaurants for gatherings and meetings.

I go out for coffee three times a week with my friend. .... I have difficulty in social situations, and I try to get out three times every week. (Riley 06/10/06).

This tenant went on to express concern that a new bistro on the street might drive up the price of coffee in the other stores, which would make it difficult for him to keep up this practice.

The agency purchases maintenance materials in bulk from sources across the city. It has, however, contracted an immediate neighbour for repairs to Building A's roof, and has a cost sharing arrangement with a neighbour about a common fence.

It is important to note, when thinking about the economic and social impact of Building A, that it also has an important function as a work location for a number of non-tenants, including support workers, agency maintenance workers, a physician, and occasional home care workers.

### 5.3 Tenants: Neighbourhood Economic Footprint, Building B

Building B's tenants also make a modest contribution to the local economy. They have created a new pocket of street activity, and a new kind of vitality on a street that had dwindling activity. Tenants use the local restaurants, green grocers, coffee shops, bakery, butcher, dollar store, pharmacy, health food store, pet store and convenience stores for small purchases. Tenants told us that they exchange information all the time, like an informal 'buying club', about where to find the best prices between the larger low cost supermarket, local green grocers, dollar stores and even regular flea markets. Most used the van provided by the agency to do their major shopping at the supermarket and purchased smaller items in the immediate neighbourhood.

Proprietors at the corner store and the corner restaurant will provide tenants with a small amount of credit.

And the pharmacist up the street he's nice, too. He gives me my prescription even if I don't have my drug card right away or if I need those pills or something and I don't have the money he will give it to me on credit... because he *trusts* me [said with some emphasis]. (Amy 28/09/06).

The agency purchases much of its furnishings and maintenance supplies through a centralized purchasing process. The community kitchen coordinator was the exception because she purchased most of the food for the twice weekly meals from the local supermarket. She said that she was beginning to negotiate with the local green grocers so that she could open an account with them.

Building B is also a work location for several support staff, and as an off-site work location for support workers, agency maintenance workers and occasional home care workers.

## 6. Neighbourhood Cohesion and Efficacy, Building A

### 6.1 Building A Tenants: Cohesion On The Street

Regular interactions between neighbours and tenants that reflect good will and support are evidence of neighbourhood cohesion. Building A tenants provided us with a number of examples of these kinds of interactions.

One man has developed a relationship with a neighbourhood potter. He goes once a week to her studio for sculpting lessons or to use the kiln. A dog groomer that tenants met at the dog park has made an arrangement where she clips their dogs' nails for considerably less than they would pay elsewhere. Neighbours gave a tenant a couch they were no longer using. One tenant told us that she fell on her way to the store, and a neighbour woman helped her up and then walked her to her destination to be certain she was all right. Another neighbour occasionally uses their car to help tenants carry heavy grocery loads.

Most of the tenants in Building A have pets. Those who have dogs are out with their animals several times a day, and are part of the informal relationships that develop between neighbours who regularly walk their dogs along the same routes and dog parks. This includes casual greetings to each other and the animals, noticing when someone has not been out for several days, and helping when there is a problem with one of the animals. Several tenants referred to the dogs as "good ambassadors" between the Building and its neighbours.

Everybody knows [my dog]. They often don't know my name, I'm just [my dog's]'s person, and that's fine. One day in the dog park two big dogs started a fight with her and my neighbours came to help me pull them off .... The guy with the Dalmatians always stops to talk and give his dogs a chance to be friendly with mine. (Kerry 06/10/06).

Like any other community, the neighbourhood cohesion is not perfect. Although tenants reported that most neighbours were very friendly, there were exceptions.

I've been trying to say 'Hi' to this one neighbour woman for three years, but I've given up. She doesn't want to say 'Hi' and that's her business. (Kerry 06/10/06).

I saw the owner of one of these stores arguing with his sisters for being particularly rude to a person with mental illness. He is always nice, but the sisters aren't. (Linda 09/06/07).

One tenant raised a concern about the changes that increased property values might have on the cohesion of the street.

There used to be just working people here, but now you have to pay half a million to buy a house. What do people who pay half a million have to say to us? (Kerry 06/10/06).

## 6.2 Building A Neighbours: Cohesion On The Street

Fourteen neighbours on the street of Building A responded to our requests for interviews. Most described a very cohesive street that they enjoyed living on. Several described how the higher property values of the last five years had encouraged people to sell, resulting in fewer families with young children living on the street. Several noted that they knew fewer people today than in the past. They described the middle section of the block (Building A is in the middle of the block) as stable and cohesive. Along the block there were clusters of residential neighbours who were regular visitors to each other's homes, and who reported that they helped each other more than in the past.

Even in this situation where some neighbours are close, **only 35% of those we spoke with knew that Building A was supportive housing**. This may be because the building has been there almost twenty years and now "fits in". There is also a polite neighbourliness, where people generally do not ask too many questions about their neighbours' daily lives. We found one neighbour who was among those who had been concerned when the building was built.

We've come to terms with the building. At first everybody was a little leery about it, because they didn't understand. Once it was up, it didn't cause any problems. It's a good-looking building, the people don't bother nobody, they stay within themselves, they don't bother anybody. It doesn't cause any problems. (Neighbour A04 09/06/07).

Another long-time neighbour went further, describing Building A tenants as:

They're good neighbours. I love having them around. We meet people in the building every day. Tenants are involved in the neighbourhood - they're just everyday people, a lot of people would not know that they had any problems at all, they're friendly, they always say hello when they go by. (Neighbour A03 09/06/07).

Neighbours give one tenant particular credit for her neighbourliness. She was a gardener who took on replacing the front lawn with an array of ground cover, flowers and shrubs, and encouraged the agency to replace an iron fence with a lower hedge. As she worked, she talked with neighbours and they began asking her about their own yards. She also built up gardens and composting in the large back yard, which is used by all tenants who wish to grow their own plot of vegetables.

They could never get anything to grow anything in there. This girl, she planted all that, in a natural way....they all contribute in their own way. (Neighbour A3, 09/06/07).

One lady that looks after the garden, we chat every day. I say 'Hi' to everybody coming and going every day. (Neighbour A04 09/06/07).

### 6.3 Building A Tenants: Contributions To Collective Efficacy

There are several examples of tenants in Building A being involved in both informal and formal actions that go beyond casual friendliness and have contributed to the nature of their immediate neighbourhood. In these examples it is clear that both the tenants and the supportive housing agency are participants in change, and in the neighbourhood's capacity to make changes. It also appears that the residential nature of the street and the length of time the building has been there have helped make these actions possible.

#### i) Street leadership: the garden

The first observation that most tenants, staff and neighbours usually make about this building is that it has a lovely front garden, and that the garden has been a point of connection between tenants and neighbours. One support worker described the Building as a "front porch community". Tenants and staff observed that the gardening by one tenant in particular not only produced a lovely garden, but over time the plant swaps and advice she shared with neighbours showed up in changed gardens all along the street. The gardening encouraged tenants to want to be out in the front yard, so they asked the agency for chairs for the front porch. The tenant who initiated the garden says:

I grew up in an immigrant family in a small town. We had to do the same thing. We put out chairs on the front porch, we say hi to people. You have to start it first. That's when people start to understand. Mental illness can make you very self-centered, but you have to work at it. We have to tell people what it's like. Don't be afraid to ask us questions, there isn't a stupid question. (Belinda 03/10/006).

#### ii) Noise and speed reduction

Neighbours involved tenants in two organized community actions. The first was an effort to reduce weekend noise from a live concert venue that opened at the end of the street. Two neighbours started the process with complaints to their city councilor, and then organized a letter writing campaign. The organizers included Building A tenants, and they feel some ownership in the resulting changes to the venue and reduction of

weekend noise. More recently the same neighbours initiated action on the speed of vehicles that tended to use the residential street as a short cut. The resulting speed bumps were being installed on the street during our first interviews, and again, some tenants had signed a petition and felt some responsibility for the change. The tenant activist talked about being involved in issues that were important to others, as a way of building solidarity for supportive housing issues:

It's difficult for some people to get out there, to sign a petition and agree with other people's political views.... If you want to get anything done it's the grassroots who's going to talk to your alderman, and sign petitions on the street. [It's important that we're involved] because when we want something done for us, all of a sudden the alderman listens because they'll see not just people from supportive housing, it's the people who have handed out the other petition. (Belinda 03/10/006).

### iii) Managing disorder

The handling of garbage can create tensions between neighbours, and the neglect of garbage can signal that a neighbourhood does not have the capacity to look after problems. In this case the relationship with neighbours was strong enough that several came to the assistance of tenants when it became clear that a neighbour on the next street was deliberately dumping garbage on Building A's property. Their intervention was successful.

Neighbours went with us to talk to one neighbour who was dumping his garbage in our back yard. I guess he thought this was public property, and that because we were crazy people we wouldn't notice. The neighbours heard him say this, but they said 'No, no, the crazy person lives in your house.' (Belinda 03/10/006).

A staff member remembered one time in particular that neighbours had called the agency because a tenant was in some distress. They knew how to reach the agency (a phone number at the front of the building) and did not call the police. When arrived she was aware that a number of neighbours "were watching to see how I handled the situation" and that they appeared to be assured by her intervention (Marion, 22/11/06).

In some contrast, one couple towards one end of the block were struggling with a problem with an immediate neighbour who had opened up their roof to shelter raccoons. Consequently there were many animals in residence and significant excrement in the yard. They had made the appropriate complaints to the city, with few results. They were not aware of the cohesion and effectiveness of the middle-of-the-block neighbours and the possible resource this might be to them.



#### iv) Safety and crime

There is not a formal neighbourhood watch on the street, but several neighbours report that they keep an eye out for each other. Tenants told us that neighbours had let them know when there were break-ins in the neighbourhood. One tenant spoke about the prevalence of crack cocaine in the neighbourhood and told us that he could identify certain local dealers. He said that consequently he accompanied women in this building and other friends in the neighbourhood at night, for their mutual protection.

The agency has acted as an important intermediary in situations that had the potential to escalate into ones that involved the police or others in on the street. One tenant described a situation where a homeless person that none of them knew managed to get into their foyer to sleep several nights in a row. They handled the situation by calling the agency and trying to find him housing, rather than calling the police. There have been periods in the house's history when there were tenants who used drugs and instances of domestic abuse. The people involved no longer live in the building, either by choice or after an internal conflict resolution process that gave them opportunities to resolve issues with their fellow tenants.

## 7. Neighbourhood Cohesion and Efficacy: Building B

### 7.1 Building B Tenants: Cohesion On The Street

Building B tenants presented a story that reflected its location. Because it was set amongst businesses, across a busy street from residences, the connections with immediate business neighbours were stronger than those with residential neighbours.

Most tenants described the neighbourhood as friendly.

When we go out there are general greetings, handshakes, smile, warm embraces, touches on the shoulder, and what not. (Herbert 8/02/07).

This general friendliness appeared to extend to situations where it was obvious that a tenant was unwell. One woman shared a very personal story of feeling accepted in the neighbourhood:

I came from a violent situation and I had a breakdown when I first moved here, so I used to be loud. And nobody would bother me, I yelled on the street, and nobody complained. And now they see that I'm OK and the neighbours are nice. They realized that I obviously went through something. (Sophie 27/09/06).

Relations between tenants and neighbourhood business people appear to be more substantial than those with residential neighbours. Ron said that he had made a point of getting to know several business people on the block.

I can see that the business community are concerned about what's going on in the neighbourhood and the people that live here. And I can see that they'd like to get to know us a little better, they want to make sure that they are safe too." (Ron 29/09/06).

Tenants told us that in a number of instances this concern had extended beyond the usual commercial transaction. The school principal had an agreement with the House that visitors and staff could use the school's parking lot. A man who operated a business in the building next door had given one tenant a set of books, and a framed picture to another. He also occasionally shared treats, and had bought coffee for one of the tenants the day we interviewed her. "He's very nice, this neighbour he's really nice." (Amy 28/09/06). And another story:

The bar owner at the corner helped me out one night when I was waiting for the TTC at the corner a guy propositioned me, and he, yes, the owner, walked me home because he saw that I was feeling uncomfortable." (Jackie 27/09/06).

The woman who operated a local pet store was a favourite with several tenants. She had helped out when one tenant's dog passed away, and had come to know other tenants in the building. A tenant died several months before our interviews, and at that time:

.... she was very supportive, and she was upset because she knew him. She took me for coffee and we spoke. (Jackie 27/09/06).

The same incident also moved a worker at the corner coffee shop who expressed her sympathies to the whole Building. Several people pointed out that their postman knew the building well, and that he had helped them out. Jackie told us that when she heard that a key staff person was leaving:

... I turned to the postman for support. He was very good with feedback. He's been our postman for two and a half years. He's like, you know people come and go and may be this will help her grow and you'll learn new experience from new people. (Jackie 27/09/06).

I think we've touched our community and given the opposite of what they expected. (Jackie 27/09/06)

When we asked about whether this neighbourhood was different than others, another tenant said that there was:

... more compassion. Like for example if I go to [corner restaurant] and say '[owner's first name], can I get a sub, I'll pay you tonight?' He'll say fine, not a problem. But if I did that in the other area where I used to live, they would've thrown me out of the restaurant. (Liz 8/02/07).

Two tenants described a mutual respect and a form of assistance between businesses and customers.

If they talk to me like a normal person then I will be their customer. We have a couple of them. [Restaurant] is one of them. One guy there is really great. If he wasn't there, I probably wouldn't bother going in, no matter how good the burgers are - I really like the customer service. I love being treated like a person. And, the girl who works the night shift at [the coffee shop] is really good. A lot of people go into there because of her interactions with them. She'll talk for a few minutes. There are other places around here that really don't want to bother, they just take your money. (Sean 29/09/06).

I get to know them and they get to know me and they start to talk a little bit and eventually you become a regular person and you strike up conversation and you make the people feel more important than just a store person." (Beth 28/09/06).

## 7.2 Building B Neighbours: Cohesion On The Street

Twenty-eight neighbours from across the street from Building B and from an adjacent residential side street agreed to our short interviews. Their survey responses described a neighbourhood that was both cohesive and in considerable change, but that had little interaction with Building B tenants. They were slightly more likely than Building A neighbours to say that the extent to which they know each other had increased, and that they helped each other more. They reported that they were aware of more children on the street. Many were pleased about the new businesses in the area, but had some concerns about who is able to afford the increased price of homes in the area. One woman told us:

It [increased prices] makes us feel somewhat uncomfortable. When we moved it was somewhat seedy, and we were comfortable with that. We're not sure we will be comfortable with yuppies, and were a bit weird with [a new coffee shop], but we've got used to it." (Neighbour B 05 02/06/07).

Most were aware of a large new mixed income housing project that was in an early construction phase several blocks from them. Several complained about the bar at the major intersection, with one suggesting that turning it into a co-op or supportive housing would make a major improvement in the neighbourhood.

The noise from Building B's street was considerable, which limited the extent to which people could have conversations in their front yards. Two men said that they couldn't open their front windows because of the noise. We noticed that the neighbours were not particularly aware of each other from one end of the block to the other, but that there were pockets of neighbours who actively supported each other. One cluster of neighbours had built a fence together, pitched in to clean up one neighbour's yard and celebrated New Year's together. A man in one of these clusters told this story:

This lady up here yelled because it was getting late and I was cutting wood, so I asked her to come and talk. So we got to know each other, because I need her to be my good neighbour because she can see everything that goes on. She was stuck for a parking place, I said park in my drive. .... When you're good to people and you usually get it back. We call it the emotional bank account. (Neighbour B15 02/06/07).

Another residential neighbour said that she exchanged lawn mowing with her neighbour, and that they had discussed sharing the costs of wireless Internet access. Another cluster were seniors who lived in a city-owned building. Many of them had known each other for years and were supportive of each other, although they did not tend to move out in the community very much.

The interactions between residential neighbours and Building B tenants appear to be mostly characterized by polite greetings and acknowledgements. Of the neighbours we

spoke with, 45% knew that the building was supportive housing. The administrator we spoke with at the school had been there when the building was proposed, and told us:

There were never any issues. It went very smoothly, there have been no issues at any time. We don't even see the people that are living in there, it's very quiet, we've never had any issue. We couldn't be any closer, proximity, but honestly it's fine. No concerns whatsoever from the school's point of view. We've never had any complaints, from the neighbours, from families, from the kids. So, as far as I'm concerned, they're good neighbours.

...They're just people that live here. Which is really the way you want it to be. It's just a building where people work, or live. I don't know whether you'd want any other interaction. The last thing you want is the stereotypical fear, when people move into supportive housing that it's negative. It hasn't been like that at all. (School administrator 03/07).

One neighbour knew people in Building B because when she took her daughter out in a stroller she often went by the building. She said she didn't need to know more about them than any of her other neighbours, but was open to being friendly if they were friendly to her. She said the interaction was very gentle, that some tenants greeted her when she went by, and she was beginning to chat a bit with those who were most open with her.

Several residential neighbours expressed a sense of isolation and some concern when they spoke about people with mental illness (not those who live in Building B). They were actually looking for guidance and some more information about mental illness. One woman was looking for assistance in a situation where a neighbour in a single-family residence had mental illness, but where there was no support.

"...it is a little scary for me. I'm a woman living alone. He is verbally abusive, and if he has mental health issues, I don't know how they might affect me. I'm pretty sure it's something [the neighbour] can't control. It would be nice if someone there told me what's going on." (Neighbour: B02 02/06/07).

Even the community-building neighbour who spoke about the "emotional bank account" was concerned about being "caught off" guard by someone with a condition that he didn't understand.

"We have to be part of the solution in terms of being an intermediary, and helping them out, but you have to be aware." (Neighbour B15 02/06/07).

### 7.3 Building B Tenants: Contributions to Collective Efficacy

Tenants in Building B have created a very active house community that is supported and facilitated by the design of Building B and the agency's support. Their capacity to handle

their own concerns is a significant contribution to the neighbourhood. They participate in regular meetings, a weekly community kitchen and have organized their own food bank - events that draw in people from other supportive housing as well as their own building. Very few tenants have moved out since the building opened, and their growing collective experience has meant that they are able to handle many day-to-day issues. They meet regularly to discuss their concerns as tenants, and an agency staff member works with them to organize internal community-building activities. Their significant community is their building – when we asked about interactions with “the community”, almost all responded by talking about relations within the building, rather than connections with the immediate neighbourhood.

#### i) Managing disorder

One tenant-initiated event was a group street clean up on Earth Day. The tenants and staff are careful to maintain a clean appearance at the front of the building, and look after two planters at the front during the summer. The side of the building has been graffiti tagged a couple of times. The agency has repainted it, at some cost.

#### ii) Safety and crime

Building B tenants and staff have demonstrated that they are capable of effective collective action to prevent crime and to handle crime when it takes place, although this may not be obvious to neighbours. In the month before our interviews a tenant was evicted because he was selling crack cocaine, and was bringing people into the building who worried other tenants. It was not a situation that the police were able to deal with effectively, although staff and tenants called and consulted with them. Tenants and staff had many meetings about it, and while the agency believes that everyone has a right to housing, including people with addictions, they could not ignore the extent to which his actions were jeopardizing the safety of others in the building. The agency provided him with options for treatment, but when he did not act on them he was evicted and court orders were taken out to keep his associates away from the house.

Even though the building is reasonably secure, tenants reported a number of instances where they were the targets of crimes perpetrated by people from outside of the building. As a group they are usually aware of events that have happened to each other, and have developed an informal, internal neighbourhood watch. In one case tenants and staff were instrumental in the arrest of a man who did not live in the building for a sexual assault that had taken place in the building. The most consistent concern, however, was drug trafficking. Tenants did not rely only on staff to take initiatives. Ron told us that:

I wrote a police report saying, look, these people are around on cheque day, they are feeding on the vulnerable.” (Ron 29/09/06).



It was not obvious to us as researchers how Building B might make its capacity to maintain safety for tenants better known among neighbours, but it was clear that its actions not only protected tenants, but also the rest of the community.

## 8. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study reinforces earlier research findings that supportive housing does not harm neighbourhoods. Our in-depth examination of these two supportive housing facilities and neighbourhoods in Toronto illustrates how tenants make important contributions to their neighbourhoods. Tenants in these buildings contribute a modest but significant amount to their local economies; contribute to the vibrancy of their area through their street presence and watchfulness; contribute to the friendliness amongst neighbours; and contribute to the collective efficacy of their neighbourhoods through actions around noise and speed, tidiness and crime.

The community-based approach of this study expanded the scope of existing supportive housing impact research to include neighbourhood contributions, and made it possible to build a particular trust with tenants. It has also contributed to the capacity of Dream Team members to be even more effective in public discussions and debates about creating more supportive housing for people with mental illness.

### 8.1 Recommendations

The Research Group has a series of recommendations for the three levels of government and for others with a stake in creating both more supportive housing and successful neighbourhoods:

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#### City of Toronto

Current City planning approval practices create regulatory hurdles that make it more difficult for supportive housing projects to move ahead. While planning law requires that proper planning principles should consider buildings and physical design only and not the personal characteristics of potential residents, planning practice has often allowed opponents to engage in questions about the economic or health status of future residents.

The cumbersome regulatory process creates unacceptable delays that can, in some cases, defeat plans for new supportive housing. Supportive housing projects sometimes require approvals from a variety of authorities, in addition to planning approvals.

Toronto's proposed 10-year housing plan which was launched in 2007 sets no specific target for new supportive housing. Dr. Anne Golden recommended 1,000

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new supportive homes every year as part of the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force of 1999. The Wellesley Institute's Blueprint to End Homelessness in Toronto in 2006 set an annual target of 2,000 supportive homes based on the latest data.

The City of Toronto should:

1. Act on the strong research evidence that shows that supportive housing facilities are not harmful to neighbourhoods, and that they contribute to strong communities. The City should apply "as-of-right" planning rules to supportive housing, and recognize that supportive housing is a necessary part of every neighbourhood by setting targets for all parts of the city.
2. Create a streamlined, "single window" approach that assigns projects to senior city staff who are responsible for securing the necessary approvals.
3. Ensure that all planning and zoning are neighborhood building processes and recognize that housing is a human right for everyone.
4. Establish clear supportive housing targets as part of its 10-year housing strategy.

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#### Government of Ontario

For more than a decade, provincial funding for supportive housing has been fractured among several ministries and departments. Much of the provincial responsibility for new affordable housing has been downloaded to municipalities, but without the financial support for new development. The Ontario government is downloading support services funded through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to newly created Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs). Not only has provincial funding for housing and services been inadequate, but fragmentation has created further obstacles for supportive housing providers.

The Government of Ontario should:

5. Act on its key funding responsibility and set specific targets for supportive housing in Toronto and other communities in the context of an overall housing strategy.
6. Make adequate funding available to meet those targets, and ensure that its funding flows through programs that ensure the housing and supports are properly coordinated at the local level.
7. Fund "portable" services that meet the needs of individuals who have a mental illness or disability but do not live in supportive housing.

8. Ensure that curriculum in schools and programs for mental health professionals, social workers, community workers, urban planners and all other related professions should include sections on the research related to mental health and housing.

---

#### Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs)

As LHINs take on the responsibility for funding supportive housing there is a danger that supportive housing service requirements will be forced to compete with a variety of other unmet health needs in local communities for a limited pool of provincial funding. Each of Ontario's LHINs must recognize the assets that supportive housing can bring to neighbourhoods.

In recent years, provincial supportive housing funding has tended to support larger supportive housing providers, presumably in the interest of administrative efficiency. While the big providers deserve support, funding programs should also recognize that small providers often provide services and meet a unique need and also deserve support.

Local Health Integration Networks should:

9. Ensure that their funding policies and practices are integrated with municipal and provincial supportive housing programs.
10. Be responsive to neighbourhood needs and recognize the unique contributions of a range of providers, from large to small agencies.

---

#### Government of Canada

The federal government's newly-created Mental Health Commission of Canada was launched with the promise that it would address, among other concerns, the critical issue of mental health and housing. Before the funding cuts and downloading of the 1990s, the federal government played a key role in housing funding. Canada now stands alone among developed countries in lacking a national housing strategy that would include supportive housing. In 2005, federal, provincial and territorial housing ministers promised that they were working towards a new Canadian housing framework, but progress has been stalled since then.

The federal government has provided some funding for pilot projects in several communities. Pilot projects can provide useful lessons, but Toronto and Canada have plenty of successful models of supportive housing. Long-term funding for housing and supports are needed, not more pilot projects.

- 
11. The federal government should establish a country-wide housing strategy that include specific targets for Toronto and other communities, and make adequate funding available to meet those targets.
  12. The Mental Health Commission of Canada must include studies of the contributions that supportive housing makes to their neighbourhoods in the Commission's campaign to eliminate stigma and discrimination
-

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against people with mental illness, and in the Commission's knowledge exchange initiatives.

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Supportive  
Housing  
Providers

13. The design and programming in supportive housing should foster or strengthen several successful approaches: an atmosphere of support and security, internal communities among tenants, child and pet friendly spaces and openness to the neighbourhood. This study indicates that gardens are important, along with porches, benches, patios and community-use rooms.
14. Housing providers should foster or strengthen a community liaison or community development function within their organizations, and support tenants who want to participate in neighbourhood-building actions and community organizations (such as a neighbourhood watch).

---

Community  
Organizations

15. Community leaders, including those in community associations and business organizations, should take an active role in building strong neighbourhoods by engaging supportive housing providers and tenants in their work. They should work to promote the assets that supportive housing tenants can bring to a neighbourhood.

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Supportive  
Housing  
Tenants

16. Get involved and stay involved! Supportive housing tenants know, first hand, the value of supportive housing in their lives. The Research Group encourages tenants to use this study to validate their experience that supportive housing is good for communities.

## 8.2 Challenges and Opportunities in Supportive Housing Policy

	Challenges	Opportunities
<b>City of Toronto</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No specific supportive housing targets</li> <li>• No inclusionary planning policies for supportive housing.</li> <li>• No “as-of-right” zoning for supportive housing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Toronto’s proposed 10-year housing plan acknowledges the value of supportive housing</li> <li>• TO housing plan consultation process is an opportunity to develop specific targets</li> </ul>
<b>Government of Ontario</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No specific supportive housing targets</li> <li>• No dedicated supportive housing funding</li> <li>• Funding for housing and services fragmented</li> <li>• No overall provincial housing strategy</li> <li>• Support services funding being downloaded to LHINs; housing funding was downloaded to municipalities in 1998.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ontario’s promise of a comprehensive Poverty Reduction Strategy offers opportunity to develop supportive housing plan</li> <li>• Ontario is currently considering a provincial housing strategy</li> <li>• “Health equity” focus at LHINs and Ministry of Health and Long Term Care allows for new focus on supportive housing</li> </ul>
<b>Government of Canada</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No specific supportive housing targets</li> <li>• No dedicated supportive housing funding</li> <li>• Latest announcement is for “pilot project” funding only, not for permanent housing / services funding</li> <li>• Three major national housing and homelessness programs set to expire in 2008.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newly created Mental Health Commission of Canada recognizes important of housing as a critical mental health issue</li> <li>• Federal government has a long history of successful housing programs</li> </ul>

### 8.3. Limitations of the Research

This project has not, to our satisfaction, answered several questions presented by the history of opposition to House B and other facilities. These questions include: why do neighbour attitudes quickly become more accepting after tenants have moved in; under what conditions do people who have accepted one supportive facility revert to negative stereotypes about people with mental illness when they are presented with a change in that facility or with a facility that they do not know; and under what conditions does this second set of attitudes change? Examining these questions would require a longitudinal project that could follow the neighbourhood involvement and attitudes of individuals connected to more than one new supportive housing project.

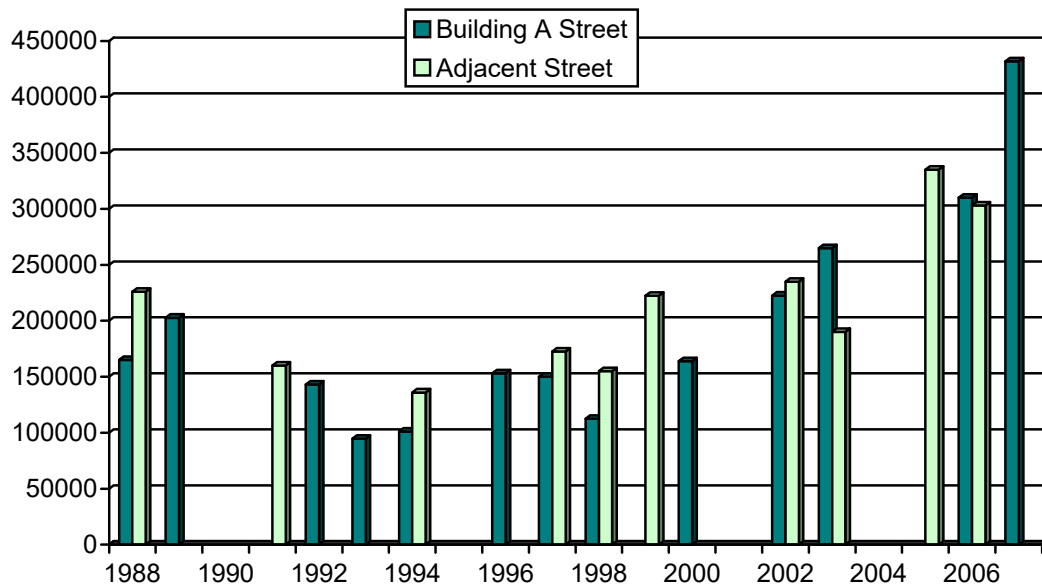


**Table 1: Neighbourhood Police Division Reported Incidents 1997 - 2006**

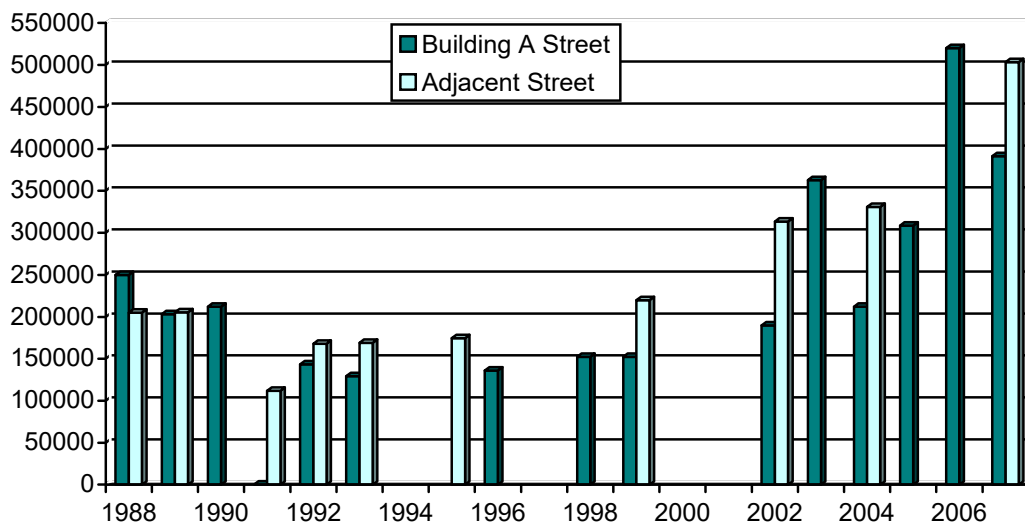
Source: Toronto Police Service, Annual Statistical Reports, 1997 - 2006

	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998 na	1997
Dispatched calls	35,091	33,382	35,529	37,331	36,505	40,679	42,155	38,575		<b><u>48,222</u></b>
Bicycles stolen	474	372	407	417	361	369	345	511		<b><u>581</u></b>
1 <sup>st</sup> degree murder	0	1	0	<b><u>3</u></b>	0	1	1	0		1
2 <sup>nd</sup> degree murder	0	0	1	1	<b><u>2</u></b>	1	1	0		1
Manslaughter	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
Attempted murder	5	1	3	1	4	<b><u>6</u></b>	2	5		5
Sexual assault	105	129	137	113	125	<b><u>154</u></b>	131	150		135
Other assault	1580	1660	1572	1576	1674	<b><u>1786</u></b>	1725	1592		1742
Robbery	315	301	271	218	240	321	257	310		<b><u>331</u></b>
Break & Enter	917	888	1255	869	994	886	1012	1093		<b><u>1370</u></b>
Motor vehicle theft	361	413	326	523	576	684	570	670		<b><u>843</u></b>
Theft over \$5000	83	99	<b><u>187</u></b>	104	46	87	74	69		61
Theft under \$5000	3307	3107	3021	2886	2755	3091	3022	3143		<b><u>4089</u></b>
Fraud	611	642	<b><u>676</u></b>	363	340	299	374	315		373
Offensive weapons	350	<b><u>388</u></b>	288	262	264	230	209	225		215
Other	3869	3644	3311	2975	3201	3484	3533	3409		<b><u>4101</u></b>
Criminal code Traffic	131	191	187	224	210	<b><u>288</u></b>	234	203		226

**Chart 1: Row/Town House Sales, Annual Average 1988 - 2007**  
**Building A Street and Adjacent Street**  
 Source: Toronto Real Estate Board



**Chart 2: Semi-Detached House Sales, Annual Average 1988 - 2007**  
**Building A Street and Adjacent Street**  
 Source: Toronto Real Estate Board



**Chart 3: Detached House Sales, Annual Average 1988 - 2007**  
**Building A Street and Adjacent Street**  
 Source: Toronto Real Estate Board

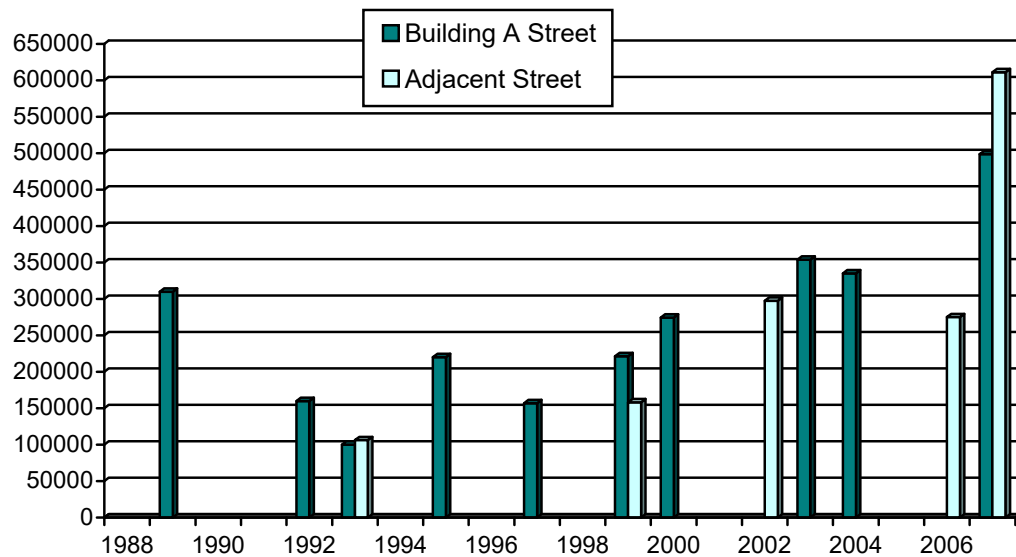


Chart 4: Row/Town House Sales, Annual Average  
 Building B Street and Adjacent Street 2002 - 2007  
 Source: Toronto Real Estate Board

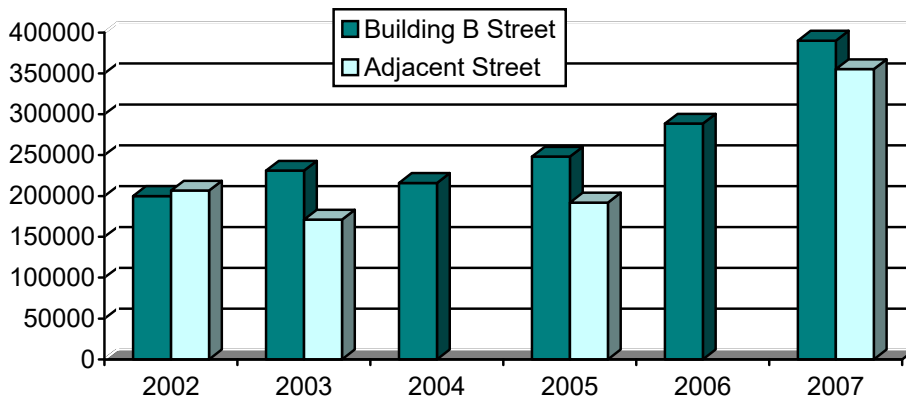
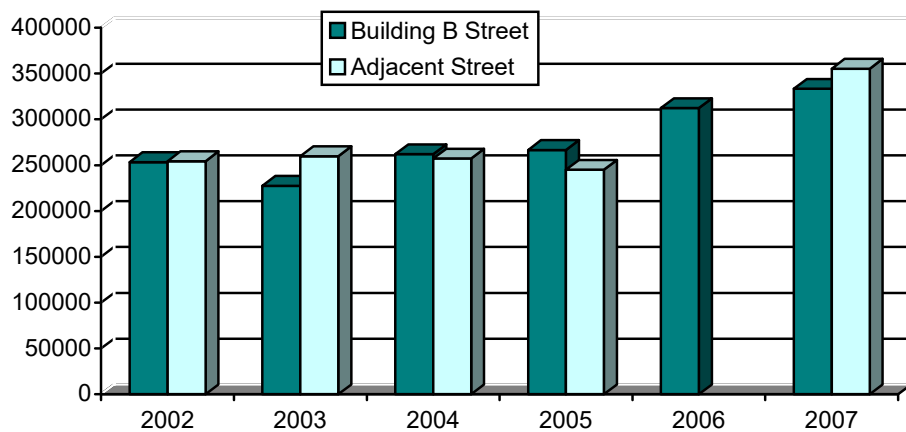


Chart 5: Semi-Detached House Sales, Annual Average  
 Building B Street and Adjacent Street 2002 - 2007  
 Source: Toronto Real Estate Board



NOTE: a semi-detached house sold for \$397,000 on Building B Street in early 2008.

**Table 2: Perception of Neighbourhood Changes, % of Respondents**

	<b>Businesses N = 14</b>	<b>Building A Neighbours N = 14</b>	<b>Building B Neighbours N = 24</b>
Neighbourhood property values			
a) decreased	14		
b) stayed the same	7	14	13
c) increased	78	86	82
Numbers of children playing			
a) decreased	14	35	13
b) stayed the same	42	29	43
c) increased	28	35	43
How much neighbours know each other			
a) decreased	7	35	8
b) stayed the same	14	29	33
c) increased	78	42	50
How much neighbours help each other			
a) decreased	21	7	8
b) stayed the same	21	28	45
c) increased	50	42	38
Quality of business in the neighbourhood			
a) decreased	28	14	13
b) stayed the same	21	14	17
c) increased	50	64	66
Crime in the neighbourhood			
a) decreased	42	35	25
b) stayed the same	28	35	54
c) increased	21	21	13
Recreation services in the neighbourhood			
a) decreased	7	7	8
b) stayed the same	50	50	50
c) increased	42	43	29
Other services in the neighbourhood			
a) decreased			
b) stayed the same	71	56	71
c) increased	28	35	21
Noise			
a) decreased	21	21	21
b) stayed the same	56	35	50
c) increased	7	7	17
% Of Respondents Who Knew Building A Or B	42	35	45

Note: all respondents did not respond to all questions

**Table 3. Do Building A and B Influence Neighbourhood Changes: Residential and Business Neighbours' Opinions**

Because of the supportive housing facilities and their tenants ....	Businesses n=14 Percent	House A Neighbours n=14 Percent	House B Neighbours n=24 Percent
Neighbourhood property values decreased	14%	0%	0%
Numbers of children playing decreased	0%	0%	0%
How much neighbours know each other decreased	0%	21%	0%
How much neighbours help each other decreased	0%	0%	0%
Quality of business in the neighbourhood decreased	7%	0%	0%
Crime in the neighbourhood increased	14%	0%	0%
Recreation services in the neighbourhood decreased	0%	0%	7%
Other services in the neighbourhood decreased	0%	0%	0%
Noise increased	7%	0%	0%



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Samsung a14



Marketplace listing  
SOLD - Samsung a14

Rate buyer

More options

Aleasha



What's your address

105 highfield street

Aleasha



I got 120 cash and can I email you  
the rest

Email me now then



Aleasha



Okay good enough

I'll wait up for you

Aleasha



Okay I'll be there in like 15 not  
even



Message





Aleasha · Samsung a14



Marketplace listing  
SOLD - Samsung a14

Rate buyer

More options

Aleasha started this chat. [View buyer profile](#)

Aleasha

Hi, is this available?



Message sent

AUG 30 AT 11:13 P.M.

Yes it's available

Aleasha



Can I come pick it up tonight ?

You got 170?

I live on thickwood how long will  
you be

Yes you can come pick up tonight  
if your here right away

Hello?



Fine what ever I'm going to bed



Message







Aleasha · Samsung a14



Marketplace listing  
SOLD - Samsung a14

Rate buyer

More options

Aleasha



Okay good enough

I'll wait up for you

Aleasha



Okay I'll be there in like 15 not even

Ok

I'll be out side

Aleasha

Okay just leaving here now buddy



Thanks for waiting

AUG 31 AT 12:08 A.M.

Aleasha



In thick wood now



You marked the listing as Sold.



Message





Aleasha · Samsung a14



Marketplace listing  
SOLD - Samsung a14

Rate buyer

More options

Hello?

Do you want this phone tonight?

I'ma only be awake, not long

Aleasha



Sorry my phone was on silent my  
apologies

You got 170?

Mine too

Want this phone still?

Aleasha



Yes I do and yes

**You can now rate each other**

People may rate one another based on their  
interactions or transactions.

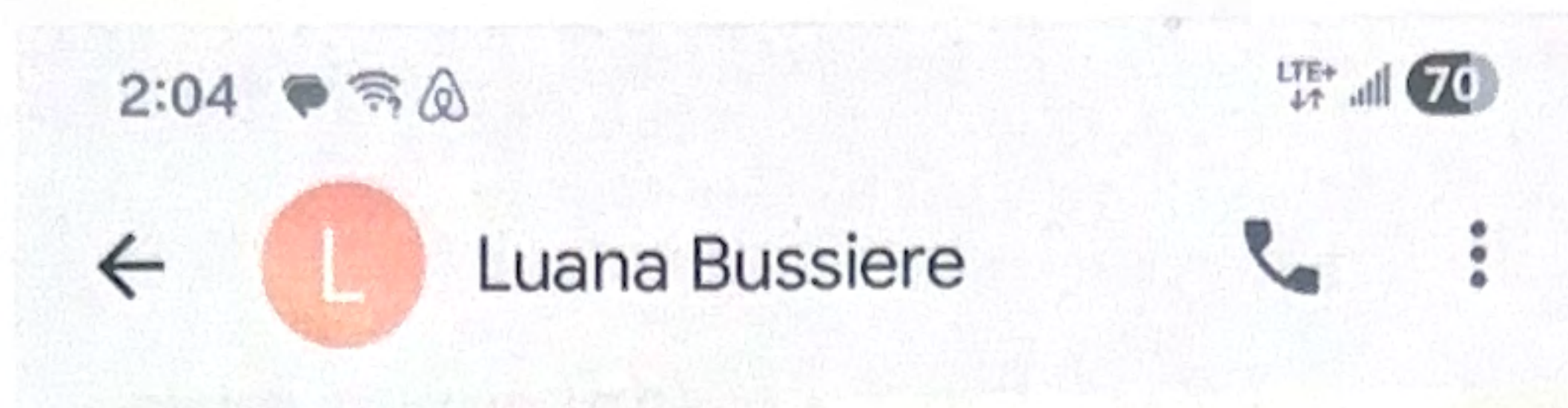
Rate Aleasha



Message







Tuesday, Sep 2 • 12:35 p.m.

Hey do you run the sober living house on 105 highfield street?



Yes

Whats up?

Did the neighbors get the development permit notices?

The neighbours have never gotten a notice and had no clue it was what it was until a bit ago. They know now. I know multiple people on that street actually.

But the issue was day night 2 drug dealers pull up on

+ RCS message





2:04

70



Luana Bussiere



what it was until a bit ago. They know now. I know multiple people on that street actually.

But the issue was Friday night 2 drug dealers pull up on motorbikes, do a deal with a resident on the front lawn and the guy then proceeds to do "crack or meth" on the lawn. From their perspective zero consequence.

The worry brought to me wasn't get them out of my neighborhood it was more assurance that whoever runs it doesn't tolerate that and will be responsive. Apparently there is a neighbor chat group and they aren't even opposed to the sober living house but are opposed ↓ drug den ...



RCS message





2:04

LTE 70



Luana Bussiere



Apparently there is a neighbor chat group and they aren't even opposed to the sober living house but are opposed to a drug den with no consequences.

How can I connect with them to hear things like this because I would very much like to know any concerns because it absolutely wouldn't be tolerated. We drug test randomly at least once a week minimum but more if we suspect anything. And I'm really strict. I just kicked someone out last week for trying to date a girl from our other house. (not taking recovery seriously)

The development permit notices are out very soon. We have to do



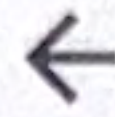
RCS message





2:04

LTE+ 70



Luana Bussiere



The development permit notices go out very soon. We have to do some door knocking. If you have someone right there that I can talk to, I don't even mind my number being shared so if something is seen we can deal with it right then when it's seen. The houses are monitored with cameras and staff drop by everyday, usually multiple times but at night if they are out of camera range or the door locks were left open, we won't catch things like that.

I'll definitely be looking into this today though.

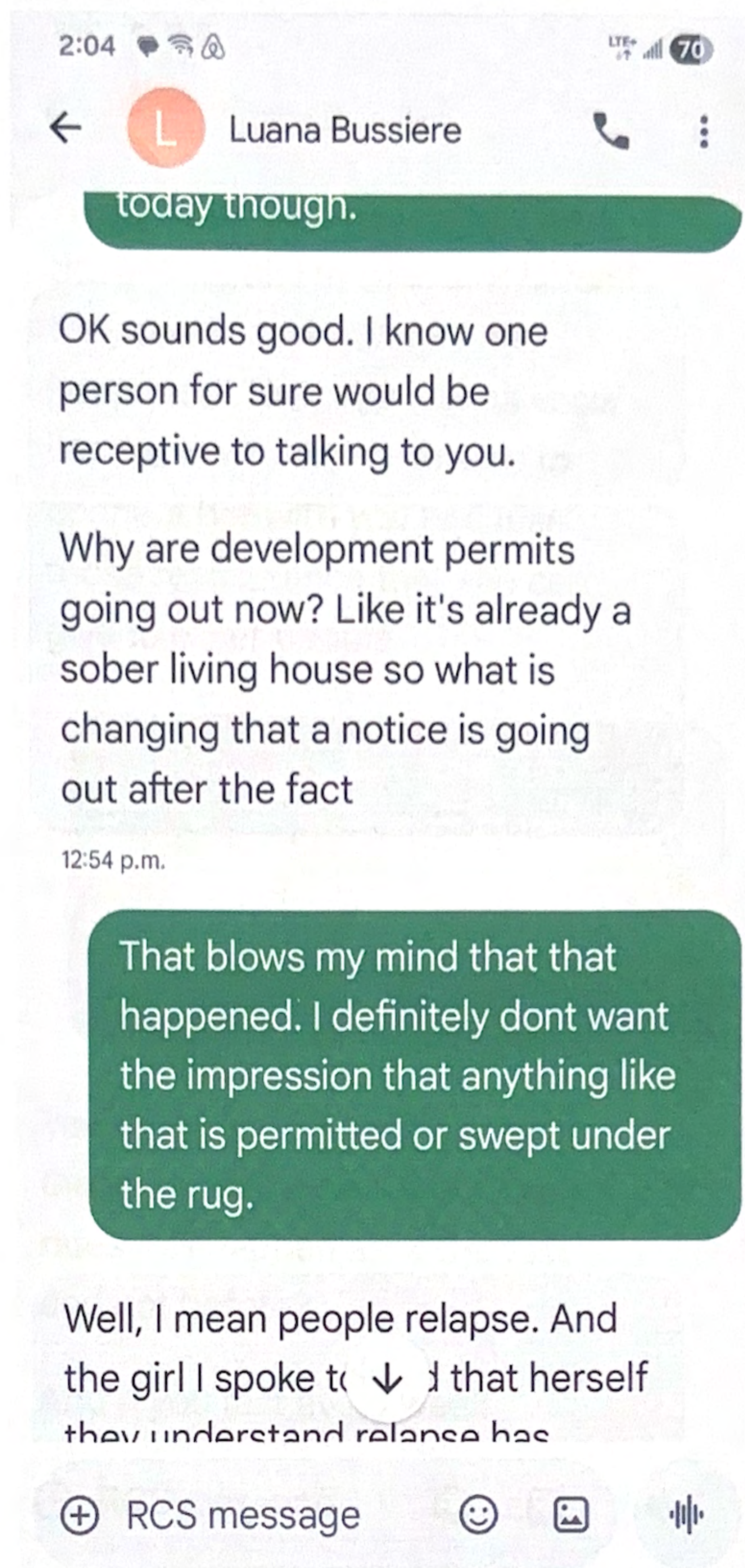
OK sounds good. Now one person for sure would be



RCS message









2:05

LTE 70



Luana Bussiere



Well, I mean people relapse. And the girl I spoke to said that herself they understand relapse has happened. They just wanna know it's dealt with. So I'll be sure to connect her with you because those reassurance that she can give to other people.

Its the proper procedure for RMWB. Just because there are more than 4 unrelated individuals in the house it makes it a group home or a boarding house

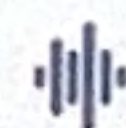
Yeah, no I understand that I just mean it's already exists so how does this happen after the fact and not before?



And if you test every week



RCS message





2:05

LTE+ 70



Luana Bussiere



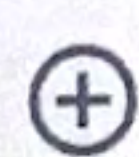
mean it's already exists so now  
does this happen after the fact  
and not before?

And if you test every week  
somebody's coming up for a  
failure, lol

Ya honestly, I want them to feel  
free to call me any time day or  
night. I want to know when there  
are concerns and I dont want  
people feeling uncomfortable.  
Most of the guys that go through  
there are good guys, but some  
just arent ready for recovery yet.

Fair enough it's a vicious cycle at  
times that's for sure.

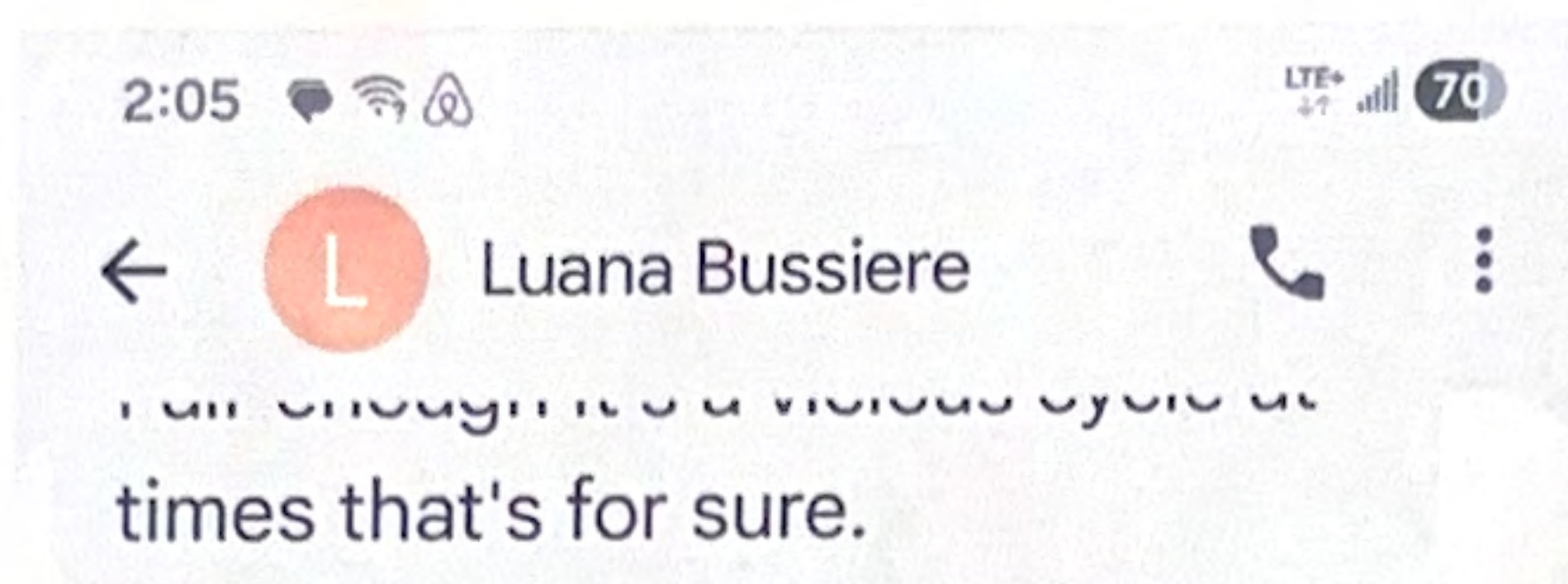
We test at least every week  
minimum. But just like on site



RCS message





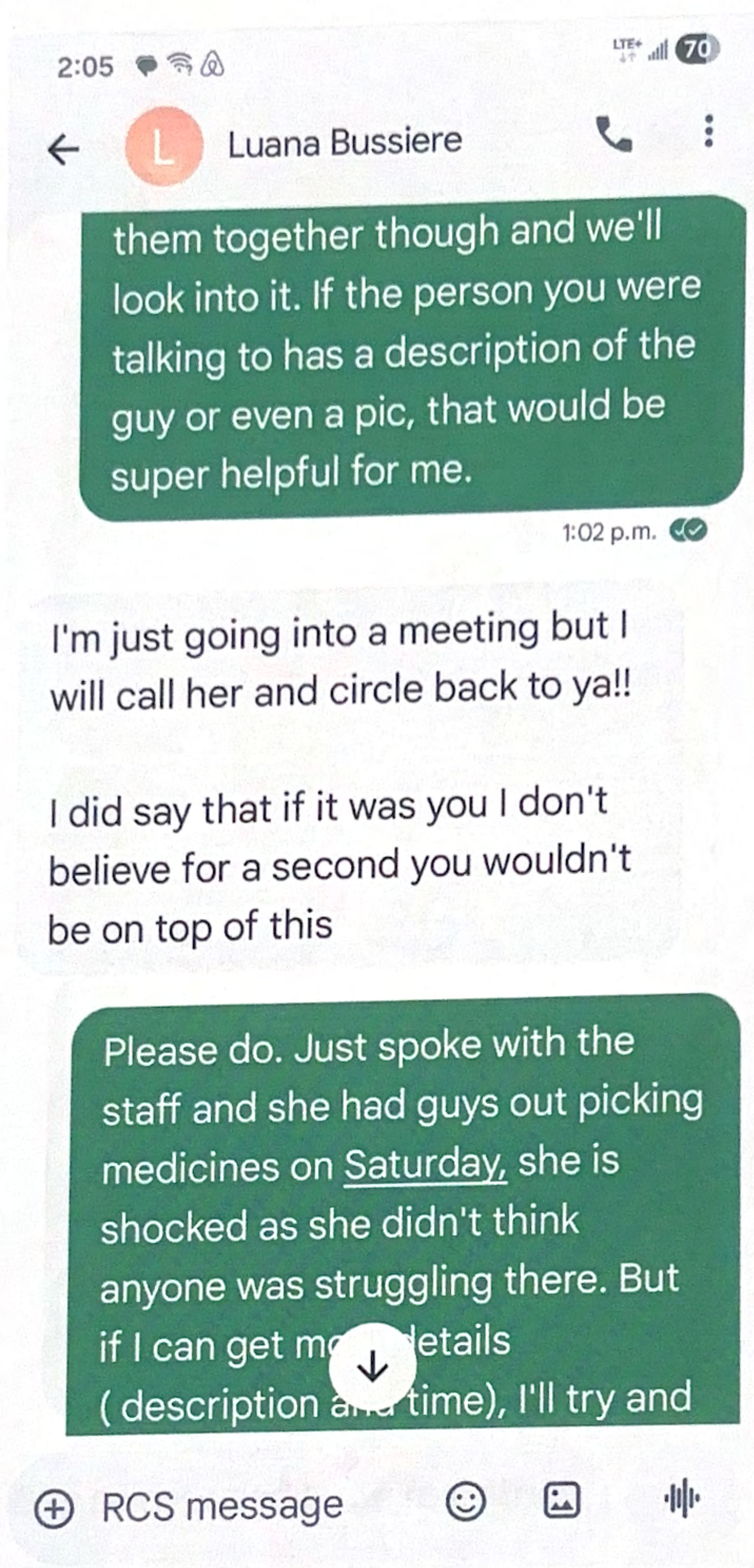


We test at least every week minimum. But just like on site. They figure out ways around it. I can say that the houses are so much more stable since we parted ways with the previous Male house Manager, we've had very little turn over. Whoever this is, this will be our 2nd male relapse in three mths. We try to run a tight ship, but the Manager has been away for her wedding for a month and the temporary manager and the other staff are pretty new so im not sure what's going on. Ill pull them together though and we'll look into it. If the person you were talking to has a description of the

⊕ RCS message









2:05

LTE+ 70



Luana Bussiere



staff and she had guys out picking medicines on Saturday, she is shocked as she didn't think anyone was struggling there. But if I can get more details (description and time), I'll try and get to the bottom of it and I'll get them all tested today.

Ugh staff were there u til 8 or 830 that evening. So I definitely need more details to sort this out

Lol every one of them but the couple that are at work today were drug tested this morning and everyone clean. Gah!! Jeez these guys! We'll be back tonight to drug test the ones that are at work right.



She said it used to be real strict



RCS message





2:05

LTE+ 70



Luana Bussiere



were drug tested this morning and everyone clean. Gah!! Jeez these guys! We'll be back tonight to drug test the ones that are at work right.

She said it used to be real strict from what they could see. People used to be in the house by 11pm but recently they are out after midnight etc.

And nope she doesn't want her name known because she doesn't want to be harassed by residents. Working on her

She would only talk to me or Becca. And that's great feedback. Looks like we need more cameras. Every resident checks in at 11 to

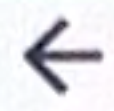
+ RCS message





2:06

LTE+ 70



Luana Bussiere



She would only talk to me or Becca. And that's great feedback. Looks like we need more cameras. Every resident checks in at 11 to say they are home, its a hard curfew.

If its this last month th though that makes sense. The Manager lives right accross the feild in the townhouses so she's on top of that house in particular. I appreciate hearing concerns though because it helps us to know where we need to focus on.

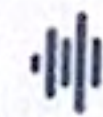
She's in NFLD though so they could be testing boundaries with the other staff. She's back on Thursday.



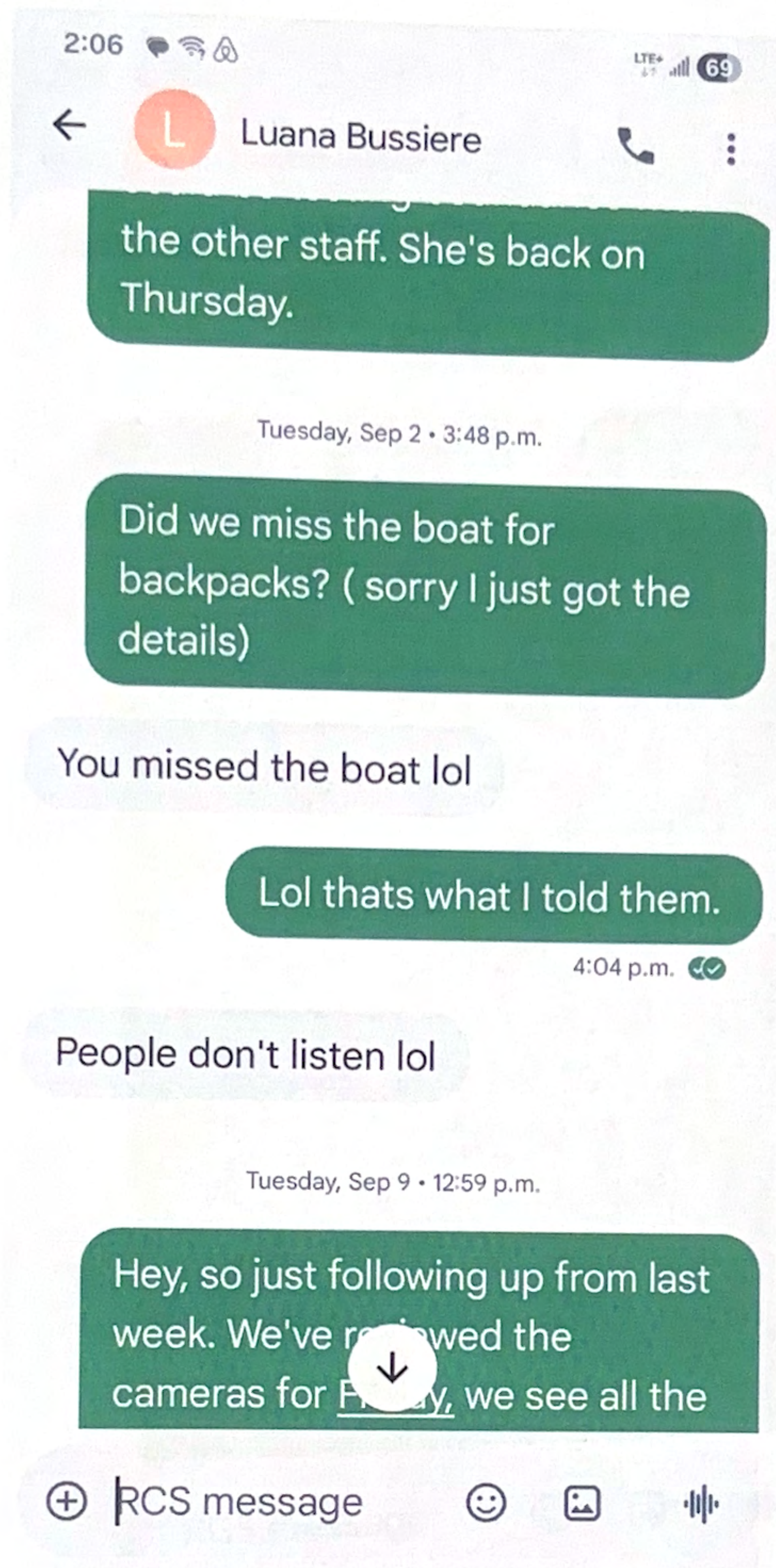
Tuesday, Sep 4 • 3:48 p.m.



RCS message









2:06

LTE+ 69



Luana Bussiere



People don't listen lol

Tuesday, Sep 9 • 12:59 p.m.

Hey, so just following up from last week. We've reviewed the cameras for Friday, we see all the valid clients coming and going and abiding by curfew . We went back a week and forward a few days to be sure. We even have audio on the outside cameras, nothing suspicious. We also drug tested everyone 2x since then, all clear. Nobody is acting strange. So I dont really know what to say about this complaint. I wish the person complaining would speak to me directly so I can address thier concerns or be able to look into things as they are



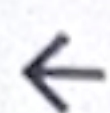
RCS message





2:06

LTE+ 69



Luana Bussiere



to me directly so I can address  
thier concerns or be able to look  
into things as they are  
happenning. But I'm not seeing or  
finding anything about this  
concern. Please let them know  
that Ive looked into it as much as  
we can from the information we  
had and cant substantiate any  
concerns.

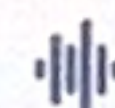
The guys have bikes so maybe  
thats what's she's talking  
about ??? Idk. But we had staff  
there multiple times that day and  
were on site that night until 830.  
So .....🙄🙄

Friday, Oct 24 • 11:48 a.m.

Hi Congratula↓s on Council! Im



RCS message





## Development Planning Report Subdivision and Development Appeal Board SDAB 2025-009

---

**File:** 2025-DP-00321

**Applicant:** Wood Buffalo Wellness Society

**Appellant:** Lisa Stewart

**Subject:** Approved Development Permit 2025-DP-00321

**Legal Description:** Lot 19, Block 42, Plan 762 0092

**Civic Address:** 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

**Land Use Designation:** R1 – Single Detached Residential District

**Development Permit Application:** August 27, 2025

**Development Permit Issuance:** October 21, 2025

**Appeal Application Date:** November 12, 2025

---

## Introduction

1. This appeal stems from the approval of Development Permit 2025-DP-00321 for a Group Home (Group Home (5-Bedroom Adult Recovery Home) at 105 Highfield Street, legally described as Lot 19, Block 42, Plan 762 0092 (the 'Subject Property') (**Attachment #1**).
2. The proposed use is within the authority of the Development Authority to approve. Therefore, it is also within the authority of the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board to consider the appeal.

## Chronology

3. The application stems from an enforcement file for operating without the appropriate Municipal approvals and permits.
4. The Development Authority hosted a pre-application meeting with the Group Home operator, Wood Buffalo Wellness Society, on June 10, 2025, to discuss the development permitting process and requirements (**Attachment #2 – Email thread**).
5. Development Permit application 2025-DP-00321 for the subject property was submitted to Planning and Development Services by the applicant, Wood Buffalo Wellness Society on August 27, 2025.



6. On September 11, 2025, the Development Permit application was placed into circulation to be reviewed by internal departments and external agencies (**Attachment #4 – Circulation Email**). Additionally, a Notice to Adjacent property owners was mailed to residents within a 60.0m radius for their information and comments. Although informing residents before a decision is made is not required, the Development Authority decided to do so in the interest of transparency and community engagement (**Attachment #5 – Notice to Adjacent Property Owners**).
7. The applicant, Wood Buffalo Wellness Society, hosted two (2) open house sessions to address questions and concerns regarding their Group Homes applications (**Attachment #6 – Open House**). Residents or concerned citizens were invited to attend at the Unifor Building, 10019 MacDonald Avenue, Fort McMurray (Downtown) on either of the following dates:
  - October 6, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM
  - October 8, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM
8. On October 7, 2025, the Development Authority sent the applicant the Review Memo and circulation comments and requested that the application be revised to reduce the number of bedrooms from seven (7) to four (4), in order to reflect the number of available parking stalls on the subject property (**Attachment #7 – Review Memo and Circulation Comments**).
9. On October 17, 2025, the Development Authority, together with internal departments, met with the applicant, Wood Buffalo Wellness Society, to review the parking stall requirements. During this meeting, the applicant confirmed that residents would not own or operate vehicles and that no dedicated staff parking would be required. Based on this information, the Development Authority confirmed its support for approving five (5) bedrooms, which aligns with the subject property's demonstrated ability to accommodate a minimum of five (5) parking stalls. In accordance with the Land Use Bylaw, the proposed Group Home is required to provide one (1) parking stall per rentable bedroom.
10. On October 21, 2025, the application was approved for a *Group Home (5-Bedroom Adult Recovery Home)* (**Attachments #8, # 9, and #10**). The approved *Development Permit* 2025-DP-00321 was advertised on the Municipality's website on October 23, 2025. Engaged residents and residents within 60.0m were notified of the decision via electronic and delivery mail (**Attachments #11 and #12**).
11. A Notice of Appeal was filed on November 12, 2025 (**Attachment #13 – Notice of Appeal**).

## Appellant Concerns

12. The applicant has indicated the following five (5) reasons for the appeal:

(1) *Lack of adequate supervision/ enforcement of rules.*

- a) The Development Authority acknowledges that the subject property was previously subject to an enforcement file requiring either the submission of a development

permit application or the cessation of operations. The identified land use concerns have been resolved through the approval of Development Permit 2025-DP-00321. Matters not related to land use are regulated by Bylaw Services. Any concerns associated with the operation of the group home or its residents may be directed to the Wood Buffalo Wellness Society.

*(2) Safety Issues*

- b) The Land Use Bylaw and related statutory documents are intended to manage and regulate land use in order to ensure orderly development in the broader public interest. The Development Authority has engaged with residents and addressed potential safety concerns through the imposition of specific conditions. Matters related to public safety must be directed to the appropriate authorities, such as the RCMP and or Bylaw Services.

*(3) Parking constraints*

- c) The Development Authority acknowledges that the anticipated parking demand is expected to be minimal. The approved five (5) bedrooms are supported by five (5) on-site parking stalls located on the subject property, including two (2) stalls within the accessory building and three (3) stalls within the driveway.

*(4) Land Use/ Character of the Area*

- d) The Development Authority acknowledges the R1 single detached low-density character, which is the reason the regulation requires one (1) stall per rentable bedroom. Also, the subject property is within walking distance of public transit stops and neighbourhood cores, providing access to goods and services.

*(5) Compliance with Bylaw No. 26/001*

- e) The Development Authority advises that the new Land Use Bylaw No. 26/001 came into effect on January 1, 2026. The Approved Development Permit 2025-DP-00321 was issued on October 21, 2025, and was therefore reviewed under the former Land Use Bylaw No. 99/059. At the time of approval, the Development Authority was bound by the applicable parking regulations, which required one (1) parking stall per rental bedroom.

Under the Land Use Bylaw, a Group Home is a defined use that does not require supervision or in-house staffing. Based on the information submitted with the application, the Development Authority determined that additional impact assessments or supporting studies, as authorized under the Land Use Bylaw, were not warranted.

It is noted that the current Land Use Bylaw No. 26/001 may allow up to a five percent (5%) variance to on-site parking requirements for properties located within 200.0 metres of a transit stop. The subject property meets this criterion and may be eligible for such a variance should a new Development Permit application be submitted.

## Discussion

13. The Subject Property is located in the Thickwood neighbourhood, within proximity to Helen Pacholko Park along Signal Road. The subject property is zoned R1 – Single Detached Residential District (the “District”), which is intended to provide low density residential development.

As such, the District designates higher volume developments such as *Basement Suites, Boarding Houses, Child Care Facilities, Educational Service Facility, and Group Homes*, as discretionary uses.

14. The Subject Property lies within the Urban Service Area and is situated within an Established Neighbourhood and Residential area under the Municipal Development Plan (Bylaw No. 24/015). (**Attachment #14 – MDP Map 8**).

15. The Subject Property is within proximity to two (2) public transit bus stops, which are the following: (**Attachment #7 – Review Memo and Circulation Comments; pages 4-5**).

- a) Route 5 Thickwood-Gregoire– Bus stop # 05083/ 05086
- b) Route 6 Thickwood-Timberlea – Bus stop # 05010/ 05011

16. The Subject Property is also located within proximity to the Father Patrick Mercredi Community High School and the Signal Road and Thickwood Boulevard Neighbourhood Core (**Attachment #7 – Review Memo and Circulation Comments; pages 4**).

17. No major concerns and no responses were identified during the circulation period to internal and external agencies. External agencies included Father Patrick Mercredi Community High School.

18. The following uses are defined as:

- a) Land Use Bylaw No. 99/059  
**GROUP HOME** means a development using a dwelling unit as a facility which is authorized, licensed or certified by a provincial authority to provide room and board for foster children or for physically, mentally, socially, developmentally or behaviorally challenged persons and which may be for the personal rehabilitation of its residents either through self-help or professional care, guidance and supervision. The residential character of the development shall be maintained with the occupants living together as a single housekeeping group using shared kitchen facilities. A group home may incorporate accommodations for resident staff as an accessory use.
- b) Municipal Development Plan (MDP) Bylaw No. 24/015  
**Established Neighbourhood** refers to developed residential lands including small to medium scale commercial, recreational, and institutional areas.
- c) Municipal Development Plan (MDP) Bylaw No. 24/015

**Established Residential** areas are the currently existing built-out residential areas throughout the Municipality. They contain a mix of housing, institutions, parks, and businesses.

## Rationale:

19. The development permit application was approved as it aligns with the intent of the R1 – Single Detached Residential District (the “District”) and complies with the Land Use Bylaw. Furthermore, formal complaints have been received, including concerns about the character and intensification of the neighbourhood (**Attachment #12**).

As previously noted, parking impacts associated with the subject property are expected to be very minimal and are not considered a concern.

20. Following the issuance of notice to adjacent property owners, the Development Authority received the following public engagement from residents:
- a) Five (5) phone calls.
  - b) Twenty-two (22) electronic mails.

### **(Attachment #12 – Engagement with Residents).**

21. During engagement with area residents, it was identified that the subject property, as well as another property in the neighbourhood, were being used as a group home and/or boarding house without the appropriate permits. The Development Authority is of the opinion that, in order to address neighbourhood concerns, the development approval should be issued on a temporary basis for a period of one year. At the end of this period, the applicant would be required to re-apply and undergo the development permit process again, thereby allowing the Development Authority to confirm that all concerns have been adequately addressed.
22. To address concerns raised by residents and minimize potential negative impacts, specific development conditions have been put in place (**Attachment # 8 – Approved Development Permit 2025-DP-00321**).

#### Condition #2

This Development Permit has been approved on a temporary basis and shall not extend beyond November 1, 2027. A new Development Permit application will be required to obtain approval to continue the Group Home use.

#### Condition #3

Construction materials, including garbage, shall be stored so as not to create a nuisance to neighbouring properties.

#### Condition #7

The Group Home shall maintain its residential character and remain in a good state of repair, including proper upkeep and cleanliness.

Condition #8

The garbage and waste material shall be stored in weather-proof and animal-proof containers and shall be visually screened in a manner compatible with the design and external materials of the Single Detached Dwelling on the property.

Condition #10

The Group Home shall be equipped with functional security cameras around the exterior of the single detached dwelling to enhance safety and security.

Condition #12

There shall be no unauthorized use of any adjoining Public Utility Lot (Lot: 18U, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092) during the course of the approved development permit.

Condition #14

The Group Home must obtain authorization, licensing, or certification from a provincial authority to operate. They must adhere strictly to all pertinent Statutes and Regulations established by the Government of Alberta within six (6) months of the issuance of this Development Permit.

23. The Development Authority is of the opinion that the proposed development will not negatively impact nearby residential areas or adjacent properties, given the provision of five (5) parking stalls per rentable bedroom.
24. The Development Authority confirmed that the neighbourhood contains seven (7) approved home businesses, which all require on-site parking and contribute to the overall intensification of the District.
25. The Subdivision and Development Appeal Board has the authority to grant a variance on a discretionary use, with or without conditions, even though the proposed development does not comply with the Land Use Bylaw, if in its opinion, the following factors are met:
  - a) The proposed development would not,
    - i. Unduly interfere with the amenities of the neighbourhood, or
    - ii. Materially interfere with or affect the use, enjoyment or value of the neighbouring parcels of land; and
  - b) The proposed development conforms with the use prescribed for that land of building in the Land Use Bylaw.

(*Land Use Bylaw* at section 28 and section 687(3)(d) of the *Municipal Government Act* RSA 200 ch- M-26 [the *MGA*]).

## Recommendation:

26. The Development Authority recommends that the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board uphold the decision of the Planner/ Development Officer.

## Attachments:

- 1) Subject Property Map
- 2) June 10, 2025 – Email thread
- 3) September 11, 2025 – Circulation email
- 4) September 16, 2025 – Notice to Adjacent Property Owners
- 5) Open House
- 6) Review Memo and Circulation Comments
- 7) Approved Development Permit 2025-DP-00321
- 8) October 21, 2025 – Email thread
- 9) Notice to Applicant
- 10) October 23, 2025 – Notice to Adjacent Property Owners
- 11) Engagement with Residents
- 12) Notice of Appeal
- 13) MDP Map 8

## REPORT TO SUBDIVISION AND DEVELOPMENT APPEAL BOARD FILE #

---

Prepared By:

**ATIA 20(1)**

Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
Planner/ Development Officer  
Planning and Development Services

Date: January 20,  
2026

Reviewed and  
Supported By:

**ATIA 20(1)**

Lee-Anne Kumka  
Supervisor  
Planning and Development Services

Date: January 20,  
2026

Presented to: Subdivision and Development Appeal Board

---





**From:** [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#)  
**To:** [Abul Azad](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Sober Living House - 233 Bacon Place  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 27, 2025 2:19:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)  
[image003.png](#)  
[image004.jpg](#)  
[First-Use-or-Change-of-Use-Checklist.pdf](#)

---

FYI

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 10, 2025 1:11 PM  
**To:** Jo-Anne Packham  
**Cc:** Jesse Tjepkema ; Becca Moores ; Jolene Wilson  
**Subject:** RE: Sober Living House - 233 Bacon Place

ATIA 20(1)

2. Property

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Thickwood, Fort McMurray  
Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092  
Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District  
Owner: GLENVILLE PROPERTY MANAGEMENT LTD. of C/O 135516 RAVINE DRIVE atten: RACHEL HAMILTON, EDMONTON, AB, T5N 3L8

Hello, Jo-Anne,

Following our brief in-person meeting this morning, I am writing to summarize the key points we discussed:

1. The Planning and Development Authority is responsible for issuing permits related to land use and development within the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB).
2. Based on the current use of your properties, a Development Permit is required for either a Boarding House or a Group Home designation.
3. **GROUP HOME** means a development using a dwelling unit as a facility which is authorized, licensed or certified by a provincial authority to provide room and board for foster children or for physically, mentally, socially, developmentally or behaviorally challenged persons and which may be for the personal rehabilitation of its residents either through self-help or professional care, guidance and supervision. The residential character of the development shall be maintained with the occupants living together as a single housekeeping group using shared kitchen facilities. A group home may incorporate accommodations for resident staff as an accessory use.
4. As of **May 26, 2025**, the **Wood Buffalo Wellness Society** operates **four (4) houses**—two for males and two for females.
5. The organization was previously affiliated with the Ross Residence.
6. The current use of these properties aligns more closely with the definition of a **Group Home**, as residents are undergoing addiction recovery, and counseling services are provided off-site.
7. The organization is also the applicant for **Development Permit 2023-DP-00177**, submitted for an **Institutional and Civic (Assisted Living Facility)** located at **ATIA 20(1)**

8. **INSTITUTIONAL AND CIVIC** means a Development for a public purpose and, may include but is not limited to such uses as schools, places of worship, community centres, health care facilities, public utilities and government Buildings. INSTITUTIONAL AND CIVIC includes, but is not limited to: CHILD CARE FACILITY; COMMERCIAL SCHOOL; COMMUNITY SERVICE FACILITY; EDUCATIONAL SERVICE FACILITY; ESSENTIAL PUBLIC SERVICE; **GROUP HOME**; HEALTH SERVICE FACILITY; HOSPITAL; PUBLIC USE; PUBLIC FACILITY; RELIGIOUS ASSEMBLY; and VISITING STUDENTS SUPERVISED HOUSING UNIT as defined in Section 10 of this Bylaw.
9. You mentioned the potential acquisition of a hotel located at **ATIA 20(1)**, within the downtown **FRA1 district**, for conversion into a Group Home. This would be a **permitted use** in that district.
10. Establishing a **Group Home** in a **residential district** is classified as a **discretionary use**, and the permitting process involves several steps:
11. The permitting process involves submitting the necessary documentation, followed by a review and circulation period of no more than two weeks. If the permit is approved, it will be advertised for 21 days both online and via mail to properties within a 60.0-meter radius of the subject property because it's a discretionary use.
12. In the event that neighbouring property owner(s) appeal the decision, the final determination on your application will rest with the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB).
13. Please ensure that a **Development Permit application** for a **Group Home** is submitted for the four (4) residential properties **no later than July 8, 2025**. Failure to submit the application by this date may result in the issuance of an enforcement notice.

**Next Steps:**

1. **Submit a Development Permit application for a First Use or Change of Use**
  - Group Home
  - Letter of Authorization (LOA) from legal property owners on Title.
2. **Safety Codes Permits (if applicable: Building, Electrical, Plumbing)**
  - Apply through our Safety Codes department.
  - Chief Building Safety Codes Officer: Greg Wolf [greg.wolf@rmwb.ca](mailto:greg.wolf@rmwb.ca)
  - Front Counter contact: [permit.inquiries@rmwb.ca](mailto:permit.inquiries@rmwb.ca)
3. **Fire Inspection**
  - Required prior to operating.
  - Schedule by calling: **780-792-5519**

Thank you kindly,



**Elias Biolley-Villalobos**

Planner

Planning & Development

T: 780-793-1017 | [rmwb.ca](http://rmwb.ca)

Office: 9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB, T9K 2K4

Fort McMurray | ᓄᓐᑕᓐᓴᓐᓴᓐ | Nistawâyâw | Etídlj Kué

Alberta T9H 2K4

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*How did we do? Provide anonymous feedback on your experience with RMWB Planning*



*& Development Services to help us improve our services. [Planning & Development Services Customer Satisfaction Survey | Participate Wood Buffalo \(rmwb.ca\)](#)*

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Thursday, June 5, 2025 1:19 PM

**To:** Jo-Anne Packham <[ed@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:ed@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; Becca Moores

<[aftercare1@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:aftercare1@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; Jolene Wilson

<[markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>

**Cc:** Jesse Tjepkema <[Jesse.Tjepkema@rmwb.ca](mailto:Jesse.Tjepkema@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** RE: Sober Living House - 233 Bacon Place

Sounds good. See you then.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**

Planner | Community Development Planning

**T:** 780-793-1017 **M:** [DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca) | [rmwb.ca](http://rmwb.ca)

---

**From:** Jo-Anne Packham <[ed@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:ed@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, June 4, 2025 7:57 PM

**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>; Becca Moores

<[aftercare1@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:aftercare1@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; Jolene Wilson

<[markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>

**Cc:** Jesse Tjepkema <[Jesse.Tjepkema@rmwb.ca](mailto:Jesse.Tjepkema@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** Re: Sober Living House - 233 Bacon Place

Sounds good, see you then.

Get [Outlook for Android](#)

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, June 4, 2025 1:57:24 PM

**To:** Jo-Anne Packham <[ed@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:ed@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; Becca Moores

<[aftercare1@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:aftercare1@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; Jolene Wilson

<[markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>

**Cc:** Jesse Tjepkema <[Jesse.Tjepkema@rmwb.ca](mailto:Jesse.Tjepkema@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** RE: Sober Living House - 233 Bacon Place

Hi Jo-Anne,

The office is located at 9909 Franklin Avenue. Please proceed to the Planning and Development front counter and ask to speak with Elias.

Cheers,



**Elias Biolley-Villalobos**

Planner

Planning & Development

**T:** 780-793-1017 | [rmwb.ca](http://rmwb.ca)

Office: 9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB, T9K 2K4

Fort McMurray | ᓄᓐᑕᓐᓴᓐᓴᓐ | Nistawâyâw | Etídlj Kué  
Alberta T9H 2K4

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*How did we do? Provide anonymous feedback on your experience with RMWB Planning & Development Services to help us improve our services. [Planning & Development Services Customer Satisfaction Survey | Participate Wood Buffalo \(rmwb.ca\)](#)*

---



**From:** [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#)  
**Bcc:** [Alberta Health \(NorthZone.EnvironmentalHealth@albertahealthservices.ca\)](#); [abn.circulation@telus.com](#); [constructionftm@sjrb.ca](#); [Gas Land Department](#); [ATCO Gas](#); [ATCO Electric](#); [RES Fire Prevention Branch](#); [Will Quach \(Will.quach@sjrb.ca\)](#); [Assessment Taxation](#); [UGSResponse](#); [Abul Azad](#)  
**Subject:** CIRCULATION – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House  
**Date:** Thursday, September 11, 2025 2:29:00 PM  
**Attachments:** ATIA 20(1) [REDACTED]

---

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello,

Planning and Development Services has received an application for a Group Home at the subject property in Fort McMurray. The applicant is Wood Buffalo Wellness Society, and the Group Home residents are adult males eighteen plus (+18). In addition, the maximum occupancy of the Group Home is seven (7) residents, with one resident per bedroom.

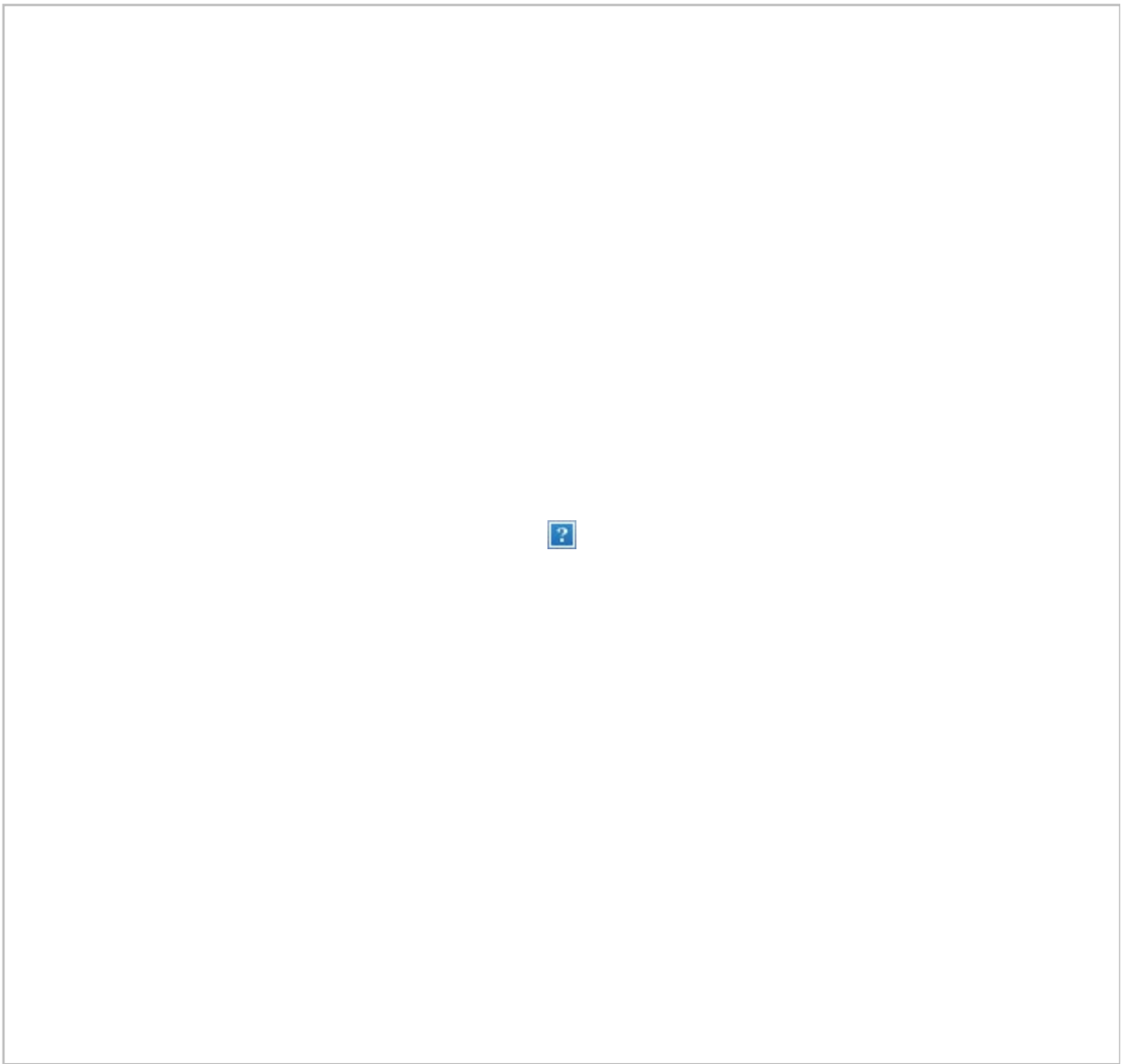
The drawings and documents are attached for your review.

Your feedback on this matter is requested by **Thursday, September 25, 2025, at 4:30 PM.**

Please do not hesitate to contact me at 780-793-1017 or [DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca) if you have any questions or concerns.

If no comments are received by the due date, it will be assumed that there are no concerns regarding this application, and approval will be considered.

Aerial Image:



Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017



Date of Posting:  
September 16, 2025

## NOTICE TO ADJACENT PROPERTY OWNERS

**Development Permit Application 2025-DP-00321 for a Group Home**

Civic address

**105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2**

Legal Land Description

**Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092**

You are notified of this development application as a resident within a 60-meter radius of the subject property. Planning and Development Services has received an application for a Group Home at the subject property in Fort McMurray. The applicant is Wood Buffalo Wellness Society, and the Group Home residents are adult males eighteen plus (+18). In addition, the maximum occupancy of the Group Home is seven (7) residents, with one resident per bedroom.

Your feedback on this matter is requested by **Friday, September 26, 2025, at 4:30 PM.**

Please do not hesitate to contact me at 780-793-1017 or [DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca) if you have any questions or concerns.

If no comments are received by the due date, it will be assumed that there are no concerns regarding this application, and approval will be considered.

Sincerely,

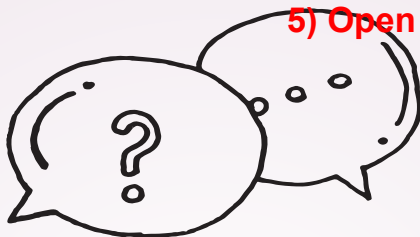
Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
Planner | Development Officer  
[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)  
T 780-793-1017  
Development Planning Branch  
Planning & Development Services







5) Open House



# LET'S TALK

DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS  
ABOUT SĀKIHITOWIN  
RECOVERY HOME?

WE HAVE ANSWERS.

October 6<sup>th</sup> 7:00pm-9:00pm

October 8<sup>th</sup> 12:00pm-2:00pm

Unifor Building  
10019 MacDonald Ave

Page 183



# Memo

Date: March 14, 2025  
To: Jolene Wilson; Administration Manager, Wood Buffalo Wellness Society  
From: Elias Biolley; Planner II, Planning & Development  
Subject: Development Permit Application 2025-DP-00321 Review Feedback

## Subject Property:

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Planning Review has determined that **revisions are required to be considered for an approval.**

The planning review comments are as follows:

1. A maximum of five (5) parking stalls to accommodate Staff check-ins, and for four (4) residents.
  - a. Parking Stall requirements: 1 stall per rentable bedroom
    - i. Proposed seven (7) bedrooms require at least seven parking stalls
    - ii. Parking stall dimensions:  $2.30\text{m} \times 5.80 = 13.34\text{m}^2$
    - iii. The subject property has the capacity for only five (5) parking stalls
      1. One (1) parking stall for daily staff check ins
      2. Four (4) parking stalls for residents
      3. Street parking is strictly prohibited






2. Reduce the number of proposed bedrooms to four (4) bedrooms.
  - a. Re-label the bedroom floor plans to other uses which may include other uses such as, staff office, library or den.
3. Aligned with the program process, the approved Development Permit would be issued as a temporary use for two (2) years. This period will allow for the review and assessment of any neighbourhood concerns. If the outcome is satisfactory, a subsequent Development Permit may be issued to allow for permanent use.
4. Install functional security cameras around the exterior of the single detached dwelling to enhance safety and security.
5. Other considerations:
  - **Chronological Development Permits:**
    - 1) 2006-DP-0476 – Home Business (Hair salon and gel nails)
    - 2) 2004-DP-0195 – Home Business (Hair salon)
    - 3) July 11, 2005 – Garage (26' x 24')
    - 4) 1979-DP-154 – Basement Development
    - 5) October 23, 1975 – Single Family Dwelling
  - **Encroachment:** no visible encroachments.
  - **Easement:**
    - 1) For Consideration- URW Plan 762 0438 – 0.3048m
  - **Neighbouring Developments:**
    - 1) 143 Highfield Street – 2022-DP-00238 – Home Business (Massage Services)
    - 2) 155 Highfield Street – 2016-DP-00243 – Home Business (Fox Glove Nail Boutique)
    - 3) 159 Highfield Street – 2011-DP-00329 – Home Business (Pet Grooming)
    - 4) 102 Highland Close – 2025-DP-00076 – Home Business
    - 5) 174 Highland Close – 2018-DP-00758 – Home Business (M. Music Studio)
    - 6) 169 Hillcrest Drive – 2023-DP-00259 – Home Business (Massage Services)
  - **Statutory Plans Review:**
    - Area Structure Plan – No Thickwood ASP
    - Municipal Development Plan
      - 1) 1.1.4.c Diverse and Attainable Housing Choices
        - a) Where possible, The Municipality will support innovative housing options that accommodate a variety of housing needs, incomes, and lifestyles. In particular, the Municipality will encourage housing innovations that respond to Wood Buffalo's northern climate, promote affordability, and/or increase local vibrancy and desirability.
        - b) The Municipality will collaborate with social profits and other organizations in Wood Buffalo in advocating to senior levels of government for investment in affordable housing.
  - **Affordability** – Housing affordability is defined in many different ways, with individual municipalities often creating their own local approach. One of the most common measures of housing affordability is the 30% shelter cost to income ratio.







- 1) 1.2.5 Maintain High Standards in Emergency Response and Preparedness
    - a) The Municipality will identify emergency mitigation measures and update emergency action plans accordingly.
  - 2) 6.2.1 Urban Service Area Development Concept
    - d) **Priority Neighbourhoods** will offer a range of housing choices to accommodate higher average densities than Established Neighbourhoods, provide a mix of residential with other uses (e.g., commercial, recreational, institutional etc.), and achieve a compact form.
- **Established Neighbourhood** refers to developed residential lands including small to medium scale commercial, recreational, and institutional areas.
  - **Established Residential** areas are the currently existing built-out residential areas throughout the Municipality. They contain a mix of housing, institutions, parks, and businesses.
  - **Priority Neighbourhood** refers to development ready lands with approved policy framework, zoned with defined densities and some level of installed infrastructure.
  - **Transit Nodes** are high concentration areas of transit interconnectivity. These are locations where rapid transit service is prioritized and often where intermodal connections can be easily or quickly made (such as to inter-regional bus service, domestic and international flights, taxis, or active transportation networks).
  - 
    - Route 6 bus stop located approximately 181 meters
    - Route 1 bus stop located approximately 204 meters
    - Neighbourhood Core located at Silin Forest Road and Signal Road – access to goods and services.

Planning requires the indicated four (4) revisions to consider an approval.



---

September 26, 2025

Wood Buffalo Wellness Society  
PO Box 5748  
Fort McMurray, AB T9H4V9

**Re: 2025-DP-00321**

Please find attached the list of comments from internal departments and franchise utilities regarding your Group Home.

Please note that this list of replies is provided for your information purposes; other conditions may apply prior to approval.

Please feel free to contact me if you require information or assistance.

Yours truly,

Planning and Development Dept.  
Land Services Branch  
Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo

Objections, Outstanding Issues or Special Requirements

2025-DP-00321

Review Comment:

Circulated To	Status	Circulated Date	Status Date	Comment
Underground Service	Approved	Sep. 11, 2025	Sep.12, 2025	<p>01. Ensure all required permits from the RMWB Safety Codes Services department are applied for, obtained, and that the permits are satisfactorily closed out.</p> <p>Note: Private dwellings (single-family homes) in use as a dwelling, that are otherwise able to maintain a Group C residential major occupancy as per the National Building Code - 2023 Alberta Edition, fall outside the scope/jurisdiction of the RMWB to enforce compliance-monitoring activities of the Safety Codes Act regarding the fire discipline. Please advise the Fire Prevention Branch if the premises is determined to require to be re-classified as a Group B, Division 4 major occupancy (home-type care occupancy).</p>
Fire Prevention	Approved	Sep. 15, 2025	Sep.22, 2025	
Bylaw Services	Approved	Sep. 11, 2025	Sep. 12, 2025	We checked with our stakeholders, and they do not have any concerns at this time.
Subdivisions	Approved	Sep. 11, 2025	Sep.19, 2025	<p>The home will require an occupancy permit and inspection, if additional work is required such as egress windows, smoke or CO alarms then additional safety codes permit will be required.</p>
Safety Codes	Approved	Sep. 11, 2025	Sep.15, 2025	
Solid Waste Services	Approved	Sep. 11, 2025	Sep.26, 2025	<p>ATCO Transmission wishes to confirm we have no conflict as we have no high-pressure pipelines in the proposed area. NOTE: ATCO Distribution [Gas] will reply under separate email. Thank you for allowing ATCO to review your proposal and provide feedback.</p>
Water Treatment Branch	Approved	Sep. 11, 2025	Sep.12, 2025	
Waste Water Treatment Branch	Approved	Sep. 11, 2025	Sep.12, 2025	
ATCO	Approved	Sep. 11, 2025	Sep. 25, 2025	

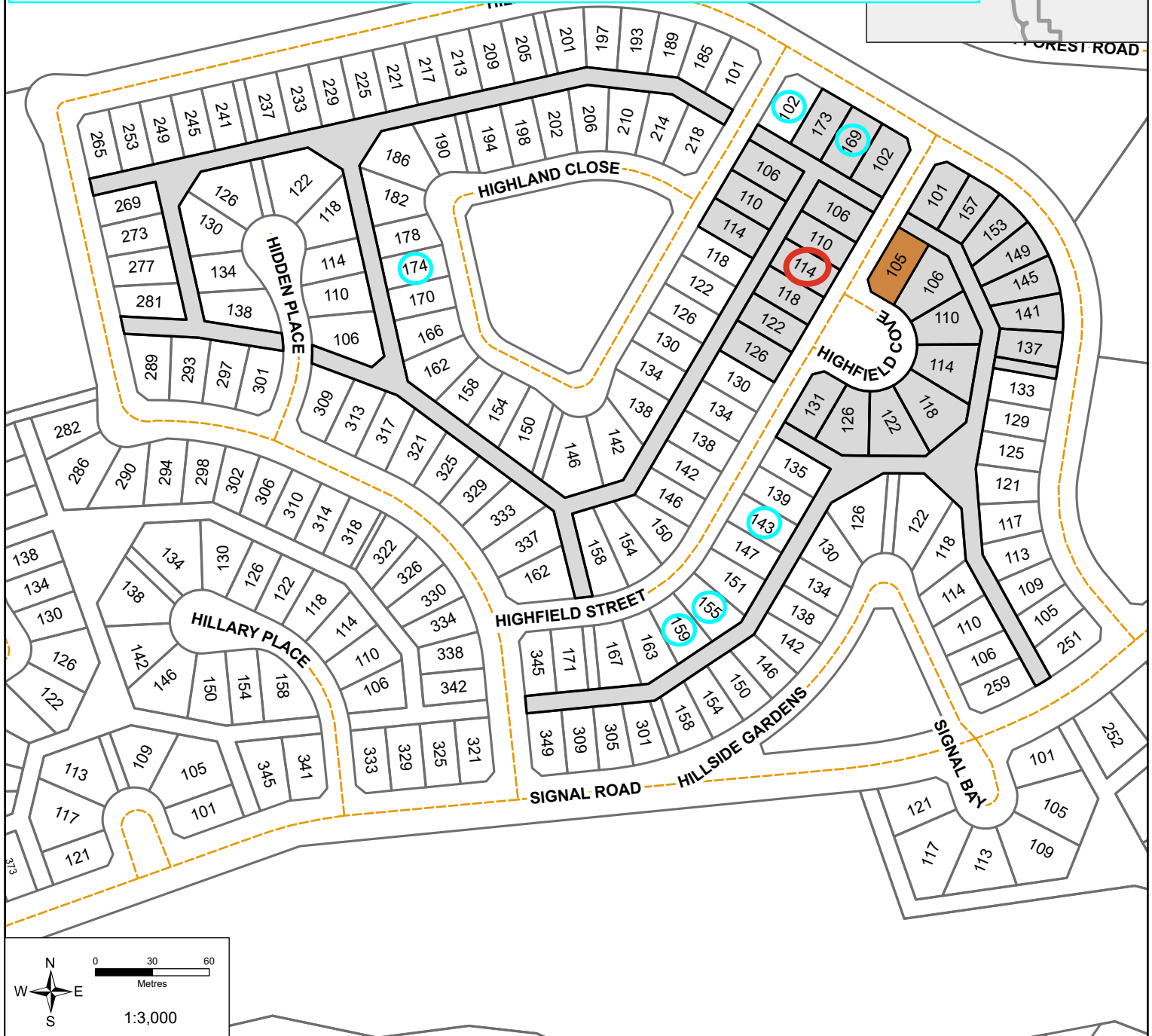


# SUBJECT AREA MAP Notification

## Neighbouring developments

- 1) 143 Highfield Street - 2022-DP-00238 - Home Business (Massage Services)
- 2) 155 Highfield Street - 2016-DP-00243 - Home Business (Fox Glove Nail Boutique)
- 3) 159 Highfield Street - 2011-DP-00329 - Home Business (Pet Grooming)
- 4) 102 Highland Close - 2025-DP-00076 - Home Business (offering art lessons.)
- 5) 174 Highland Close - 2018-DP-00758 - Home Business (M. Music Studio)
- 6) 169 Hillcrest Drive - 2023-DP-00259 - Home Business (Massage Services)

114 Highfield Street - No information regarding unauthorized boarding house.

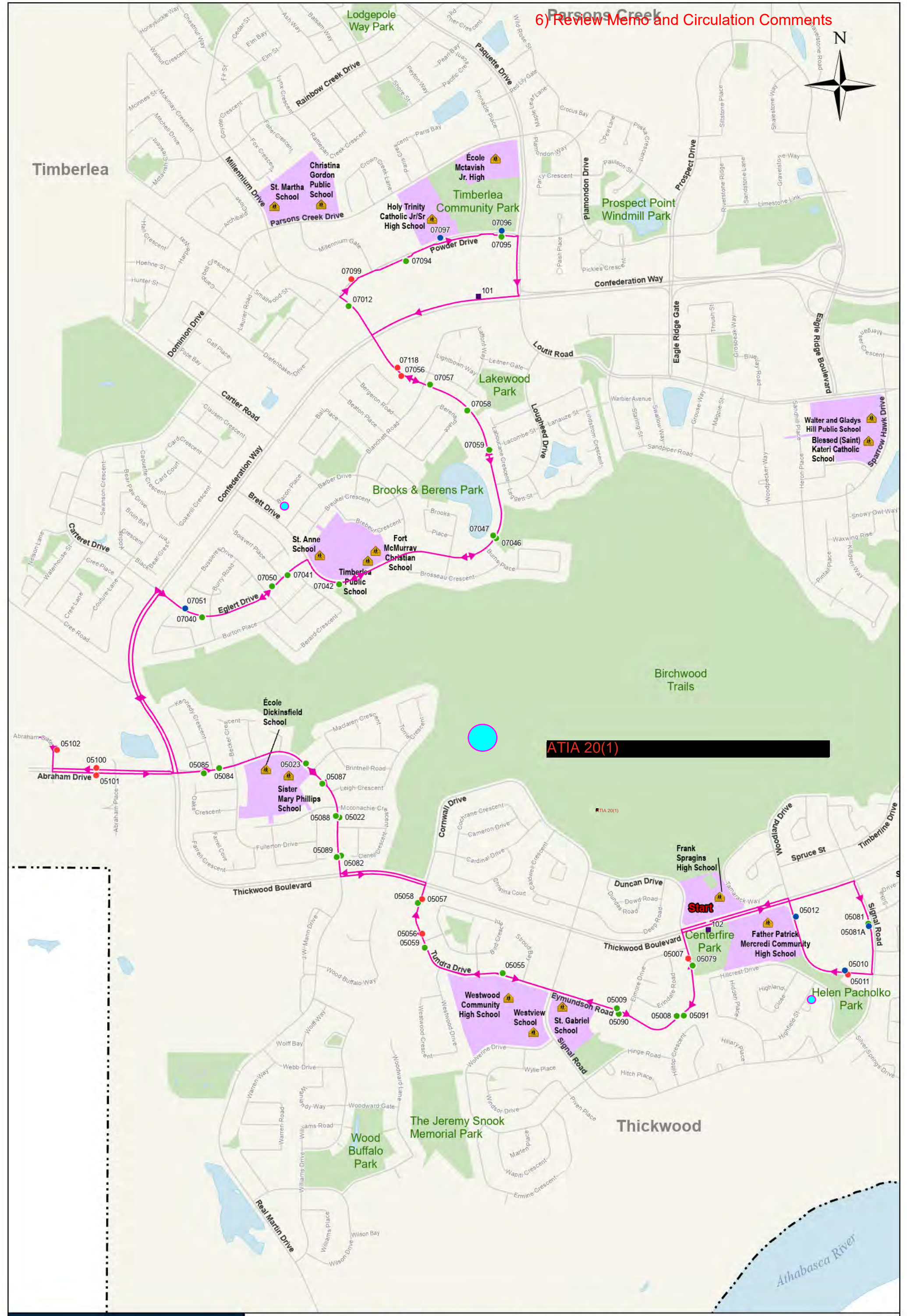


- Survey Parcels
- Adjacent Properties within 60 m
- Subject Area

**105 HIGHFIELD STREET**  
**Lot 19, Block 42, Plan 7620092**







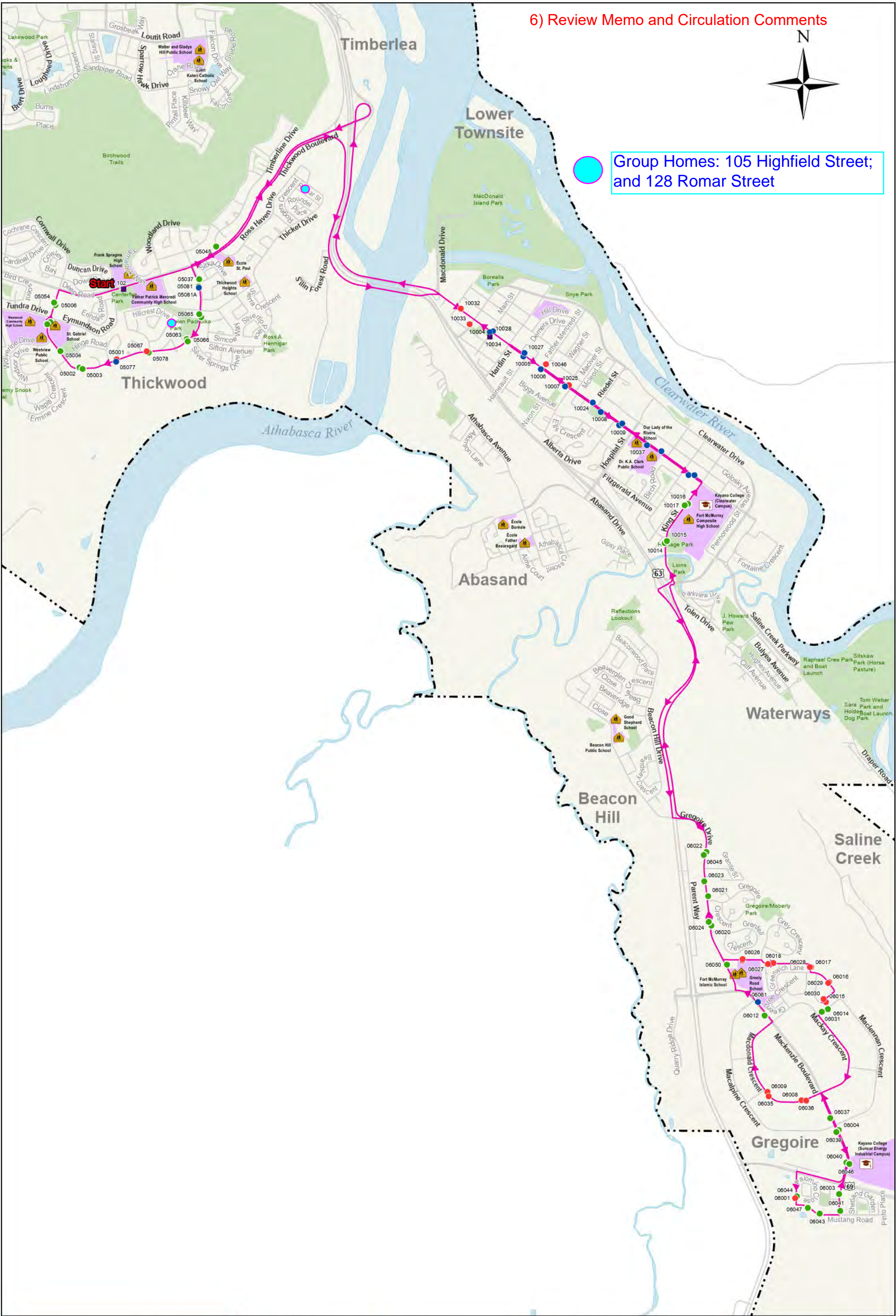
# ROUTE 6 THICKWOOD - TIMBERLEA

- Heated Shelter
- Transit Stops
- Terminal
- Unheated Shelter
- 🏫 School
- 🎓 College Campus
- 🏫 Learning Centre
- 🚌 Bus Route
- 🛣️ Road
- 🗺️ Community Boundary
- 🎓 Education Facility
- 🌳 Park
- 💧 Water Feature





Group Homes: 105 Highfield Street; and 128 Romar Street







Kari Boschee  
BSc BEH(AD) CPHI(C)  
Public Health Inspector II  
Alberta Health Services – North Zone  
Fort McMurray  
Direct: (780) 742-6114  
Email: Kari.Boschee@ahs.ca

September 25, 2025

Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 2K4  
T: 780-793-1017

Dear Mr. Biolley-Villalobos:

**Re: Development Permit: 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House**  
**Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2**  
**Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092**  
**Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home**

After reviewing the materials provided with this development permit application, AHS SHE understands that this application will involve utilizing an existing single story residential home as a social care facility providing living accommodations, food preparation space in addition to mental and social health services. The existing residential home is located within the municipality of Fort McMurray and is connected to the municipal drinking water and sewer systems. Some minor renovations may be required to convert the residential home into the adult group home. This facility is proposed to house 7 full-time clients – all will be adult males. This facility will be managed by the Wood Buffalo Wellness Society.

Alberta Health Services – Environmental Public Health has received and reviewed the above referenced application for development (**2025-DP-00321**) and has the following comments:

1. If a Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) report has been submitted in support of this application, AHS wishes to have an opportunity to review the document as it becomes available. This would allow for the evaluation of any potential environmental and public health concerns related to past or present land use of property and surrounding areas.



2. Ensure activities associated with construction and operation of the site are maintained in accordance with the Alberta Public Health Act Nuisance and General Sanitation Regulation (AR 243/2003) which states:  
  
No person shall create, commit or maintain a nuisance. A person who creates, commits or maintains any condition that is or might become injurious or dangerous to the public health or that might hinder in any manner the prevention or suppression of disease is deemed to have created, committed or maintained a nuisance.
3. Social Care Facilities, including adult group homes, must adhere to the requirements of the Alberta Public Health Act including the Alberta **Housing Regulation and Minimum Housing and Health Standards**. Please use the following link to access both the regulation and the standard; [Health Enforcement Orders | Alberta Health Services](#).
4. The plans for the basement area showed bedrooms without windows, which unless the home is sprinklered, would not be suitable for emergency egress requirements. It is also recommended that the size of the other windows in the proposed basement bedrooms be reviewed to ensure they meet the size requirements for emergency egress. All rooms for sleeping are also required to have openable windows for ventilation.
5. The basement plans also showed a second kitchen area which may require mechanical ventilation to the outside for cooking equipment. Please refer to fire and safety codes for specific requirements. The description provided with this application did not outline the plans for food preparation for clients – if this will be self service or provided by food handlers.
6. An approval inspection with a Public Health Inspector is required for social care facilities including adult group homes prior to beginning operations. Please call the SHE Contact Centre at: 1-833-476-4743 or submit an online request at the following link to schedule an inspection; [Contact Environmental Public Health · Alberta Health Services](#)
7. It is imperative that the applicant abide by the appropriate Alberta Building Codes, Fire Codes and Public Health Legislation during all stages of development and operation.



8. If any evidence of contamination or other issues of public health concern is identified at any phase of development, AHS wishes to be notified.

Please call (780) 742-6114 or e-mail [Kari.Boschee@ahs.ca](mailto:Kari.Boschee@ahs.ca) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

ATIA 20(1)

Kari Boschee, BSc, BEH(AD), CPHI(C)  
Public Health Inspector II/Executive Officer  
Public Health/Environmental Public Health  
Alberta Health Services – North Zone



October 21, 2025

**Applicant**

WOOD BUFFALO WELLNESS SOCIETY  
PO Box 5748  
Fort McMurray, AB T9H4V9  
(780) 713-9794

**Owner**

GLENVILLE PROPERTY MANAGEMENT LTD.  
C/O 13516 RAVINE DRIVE, ATTN: RACHEL  
HAMILTON EDMONTON AB T5N3L8  
(780) 242-0888

**RE: Group Home (5-Bedroom Adult Recovery Home).  
105 HIGHFIELD STREET  
Lot: 19 Block: 42 Plan: 762 0092**

Your application for a development permit at the above location has been approved by the Development Officer. This approval is subject to the conditions as outlined in the enclosed Development Permit.

**PLEASE READ PERMIT CONDITIONS CAREFULLY.**

**This development permit shall expire and no longer be valid after one year from the date of decision of the permit if no construction has been initiated. Any other necessary permits shall be in place prior to commencement of any construction or occupancy. In the case of a change of use within an existing structure, where no significant construction or reconstruction is necessary, the applicant shall have the new use in operation within one year of the decision of the development permit.**

**IMPORTANT NOTE**

1. Under the Municipal Government Amendment Act, this approval may be appealed within twenty one (21) days after the day of decision being posted. Should this decision be appealed within twenty one (21) days after the Date of Decision, this permit shall not become effective until the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board has determined the appeal and the Permit may be modified or nullified thereby. Commencement of the approved Development prior to expiry of the appeal period is at your own risk.
2. An appeal shall contain statement of the grounds of appeal and shall be delivered personally or by registered mail so as to reach the Secretary of the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board, 9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 2K4 within the prescribed time period of twenty one (21) days.
3. Upon delivery of Notice of Appeal, the appellant shall pay to the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, where the appellant is the owner of the site, or his agent, a fee of \$1000.00.

Compliance with other legislation - A person applying for, or in possession of a valid development permit is not relieved from full responsibility for ascertaining and complying with, or carrying out development in accordance with:

- a. the requirements of the Safety Codes Act, Environment Protection and Enhancement Act and Natural Resources Conservation Board Act;
- b. the requirements of any other Federal, Provincial, or Municipal statute, regulation code or standard; and
- c. the conditions of any caveat, covenant, easement or other instrument affecting a building or land.

The Municipality is not responsible for not does the Municipality have any obligation whatsoever to determine what other legislation may apply to a development, nor monitor or enforce compliance with such legislation.

**REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF WOOD BUFFALO**

**Planning & Development Services**

**per:**

**ATIA 20(1)**

October 21, 2025

**Date**

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos**

**Planner II**

**Planning and Development Services**

**Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo**

**DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca**

9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada, T9H 2K4 [www.rmwb.ca](http://www.rmwb.ca)

Anzac • Conklin • Draper • Fort Chipewyan • Fort Fitzgerald • Fort McKay

Fort McMurray • Gregoire Lake Estates • Janvier • Mariana Lake • Sapræ Creek Estates



**Permit Number**  
**2025-DP-00321**

**Applicant:** markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com

**Issued :** October 21, 2025

# Development Permit

**105 HIGHFIELD STREET**

Lot	Block	Plan	Section	Township	Range
19	42	762 0092	19	89	9

## Group Home

Group Home (5-Bedroom Adult Recovery Home).

Discretionary Uses – Planning Commission:  
**Advertising Date: Thursday, October 23, 2025**

- This development was approved by the Development Officer and is subject to the conditions attached to this permit.
- All conditions stated on this development permit must be complied with.
- You have one year from Date of Decision to commence construction. All appropriate building/mechanical permits must be applied for and issued. In the case of a change of use within an existing structure where no significant construction or reconstruction is necessary, the applicant shall have the new use in operation within one year of the decision of the development permit.

**Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo**  
**Planning & Development Services**  
per:

**ATIA 20(1)**

**Issued :** October 21, 2025

**Date**

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos**  
**Planner II**  
**Planning and Development Services**

**Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo**  
**DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca**



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**Advisory Notes:**

- 1 Any signage proposed for this development shall require a separate Development Permit application and approval.
- 2 All Federal, Provincial and Municipal statutes and regulations shall be met, including the Alberta Building Code.
- 3 A Utility Installation Permit may be required from the developer and shall be obtained from Engineering Services Division prior to installing underground utilities.
- 4 A Municipal Business License may be required for this development. Please contact the Planning and Development Services front counter staff at [permit.inquiries@rmwb.ca](mailto:permit.inquiries@rmwb.ca) for further information and, if applicable, to obtain an application.
- 5 The Alberta Fire Code applies in and around buildings existing or being constructed on a site. Complete project plans and specifications, construction fire safety plans, and fire related activities requiring Fire Prevention Permits shall be reviewed by the Fire Authority prior to the commencement of any work related thereto. Inquiries and permit applications shall be submitted to the Fire Authority.
- 6 The property has been previously approved for the following Development Permits:
  - 6.1) Single Family Dwelling - October 23, 1975
  - 6.2) Basement Development - 1979-154
  - 6.3) Garage (26' x 24') - July 11, 2005
- 7 **GROUP HOME** means a development using a dwelling unit as a facility which is authorized, licensed or certified by a provincial authority to provide room and board for foster children or for physically, mentally, socially, developmentally or behaviorally challenged persons and which may be for the personal rehabilitation of its residents either through self-help or professional care, guidance and supervision. The residential character of the development shall be maintained with the occupants living together as a single housekeeping group using shared kitchen facilities. A group home may incorporate accommodations for resident staff as an accessory use.

**Conditions:**

- 1 This development is classified as a Group Home (5-Bedroom Adult Recovery Home) and is a Discretionary Use–Planning Commission in the R1 – Single Detached Residential District.
- 2 This Development Permit has been approved on a temporary basis and shall not extend beyond **November 1, 2027**. A new Development Permit application will be required to obtain approval to continue the Group Home use.
- 3 Construction materials, including garbage, shall be stored so as not to create a nuisance to neighbouring properties.
- 4 The building location, design and external finish shall be as indicated on the approved drawings. Any changes to the approved plans shall be submitted to the Development Officer for further approval, even if said changes are minor in nature and are consistent with the regulations applied to the site.
- 5 A minimum of five (5) on-site parking stalls shall be provided for this development. The required parking stalls shall be accessible from a public thoroughfare, and be surfaced with gravel, asphalt, concrete or a similar material.
- 6 A minimum of thirty percent (30%) of the gross lot area shall consist of soft landscaping.
- 7 The Group Home shall maintain its residential character and remain in a good state of repair, including proper upkeep and cleanliness.
- 8 The garbage and waste material shall be stored in weather-proof and animal-proof containers and shall be visually screened in a manner compatible with the design and external materials of the Single Detached Dwelling on the property.
- 9 The Accessory Building (Garage) shall not be used as a dwelling unit.
- 10 The Group Home shall be equipped with functional security cameras around the exterior of the Single Detached Dwelling to enhance safety and security.
- 11 All on site lighting shall be located, oriented and shielded so as to restrict the unnecessary illumination of adjacent residential properties.
- 12 There shall be no unauthorized use of any adjoining Public Utility Lot (Lot: 18U, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092) during the course of the approved development permit.
- 13 All required Safety Code permits under the Safety Code Act in the: building, mechanical, electrical, gas, plumbing and private sewage disciplines must be obtained for this development. Please contact the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo - Planning and Development Branch to obtain the required Safety Code permits or for information regarding these permits 780-799-8695.
- 14 The Group Home must obtain authorization, licensing, or certification from a provincial authority to operate. They must adhere strictly to all pertinent Statutes and Regulations established by the Government of Alberta within six (6) months of the issuance of this Development Permit.



Wood Buffalo Wellness Society  
PO Box 5748  
Fort McMurray, Alberta  
T9H 4V9  
  
Phone (780) 334 – 2398  
Fax (780) 334 – 2352  
www.woodbuffalowellnessociety.com

July 31, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

I/We, the undersigned, am/are the registered owner(s) of the property located at 105 Highfield Street.

I/We hereby authorize Wood Buffalo Wellness Society, to act on my/our behalf in submitting a Development Permit (DP) application for a Group Home at this property. This includes providing all required documentation, including the building plans.

This authorization is given voluntarily, and the information above is accurate to the best of my/our knowledge.

Sincerely,

Glenville Property Management Ltd.

**ATIA 20(1)**

Authorized Signatory, Tyler Hamilton

Date:

August 4, 2025

**ATIA 20(1)**



**ATIA 20(1)****LAND SURVEYOR'S REAL PROPERTY REPORT****TO:**

105 HIGHFIELD STREET  
Fort McMurray, Alberta  
(the "Client")

**Re: LOT 19, BLOCK 42, PLAN 762 0092**  
105 HIGHFIELD STREET  
Fort McMurray, Alberta  
(the "Property")

Date of Survey : August 27, 1992 – May 4th, 2007

Date of title search: May 10th, 2007 Title No: 042 006 470

**CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this Report, which includes the adjacent Plan and related Survey, was prepared and performed under my personal supervision and in accordance with the Manual of Standard Practice of the Alberta Land Surveyors' Association and Supplements thereto. Accordingly, within those standards and as of the date of this Report, I am of the opinion that:

1. the Plan illustrates the boundaries of the Property, the permanent visible improvements situated thereon (the "Improvements"), registered easements, rights-of-way, and other registered instruments affecting the extent of the title to the Property,
2. the Improvements are entirely within the boundaries of the Property.
3. no visible encroachments exist on the Property from any improvements situated on an adjoining property.
4. no visible encroachments exist on registered easements, rights-of-way or other registered instruments affecting the extent of property.
5. all fences are within 0.20 metres of the property line unless otherwise noted.

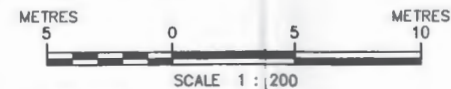
Purpose: This Report and the Related Plan and Survey have been prepared and performed only for the benefit of the Client, the Client's purchaser (if this was prepared to facilitate a sale) and any of their legal advisors and lenders/mortgagees. Copying is NOT permitted. Where applicable, registered easements, utility rights-of-way, and other registered instruments affecting the extent of the property have been shown on the adjacent Plan. Unless otherwise shown, property corner markers have not been placed during the survey for this Report.

The Plan should not be used to establish property boundaries due to the high degree of risk of the user making an error in measurement.

Dated at Edmonton, Alberta  
May 17th, 2007

**ATIA 20(1)**

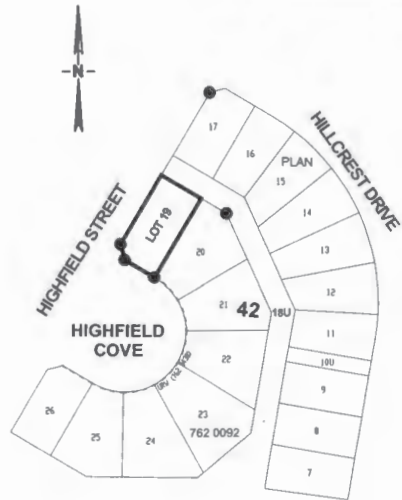
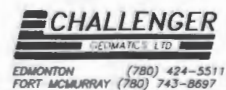
Rod Buchko, A.L.S.

**Property is subject to:**

'SEE ATTACHED TITLE'

©CHALLENGER GEOMATICS LTD. 2007

DWN BY: RJ FILE: 26929-RPR  
CHK. BY: TT/RB DATE: May 17th, 2007

**LOCATION PLAN**

SCALE: 1:2000

**RPR UPDATE**

UPDATE OF JOB 92-S-4022

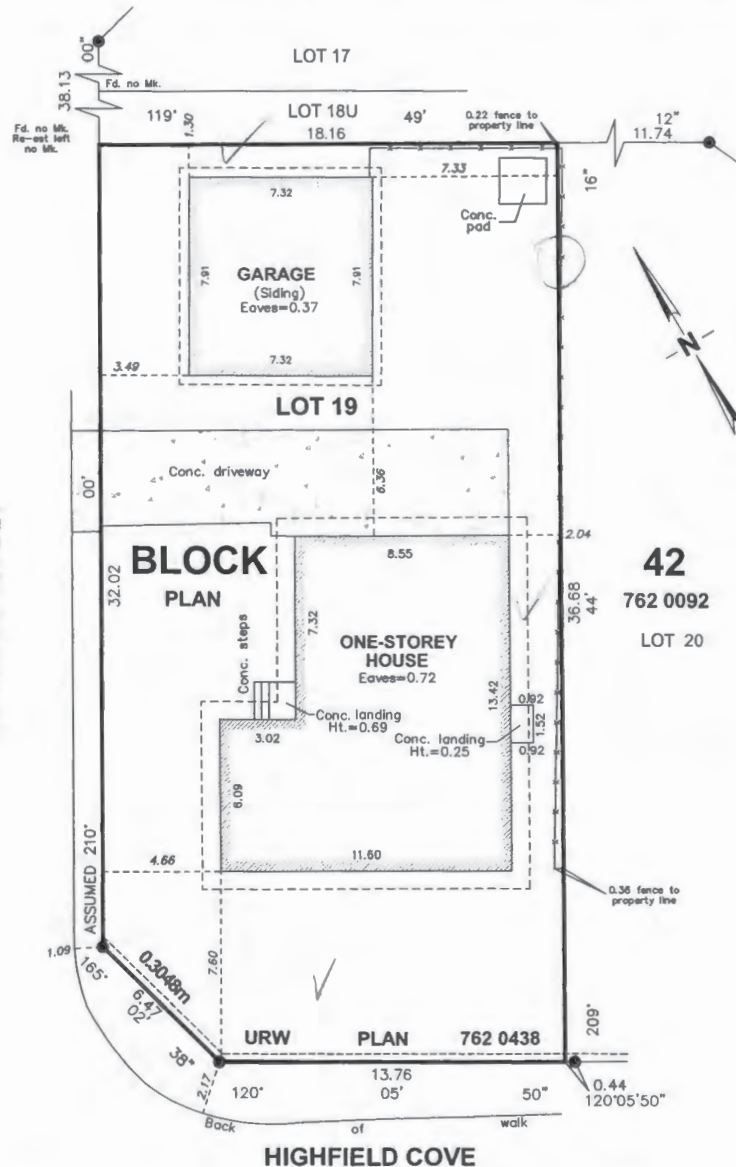
**LEGEND & NOTES**

Dimensions shown are in metres and decimals thereof.  
Dimensions and side yard distances refer to foundation of building and are perpendicular to the property lines unless shown otherwise, and are shown thus:   
Statutory iron post found shown thus:

Fence   
A.L.S. Alberta Land Surveyor  
Conc. Concrete  
Fd. Found  
Ht. Height  
Mk. Mark  
m. metres  
U Public utility  
Re-est. Re-established  
URW Utility Right of Way

2

HIGHFIELD STREET



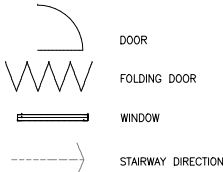
This approval is for five (5) bedrooms and no other rooms shall be used as bedrooms.



NOTES:  
1. ALL DIMENSIONS AND DISTANCES ARE IN METERS UNLESS SHOWN OTHERWISE.

THE INFORMATION CONTAINED ON THIS DRAWING, AND ANY DOCUMENTATION PERTAINING TO THIS DRAWING IS CURRENT AS OF 23-JUL-2025. ANY FACILITIES UNDER OR ABOVE GROUND INSTALLED AFTER THE AFORE MENTIONED DATE MAY NOT HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS DOCUMENT, OR ITS SUPPORT DOCUMENTS.

LEGEND:



CMC ADDRESS: 105 HIGHFIELD STREET  
LEGAL ADDRESS: LOT 19, BLOCK 42, PLAN 762 0092  
CLIENT: WOOD BUFFALO WELLNESS SOCIETY

SITE MAP:

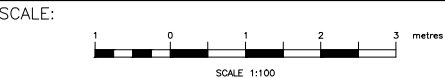


REVISIONS

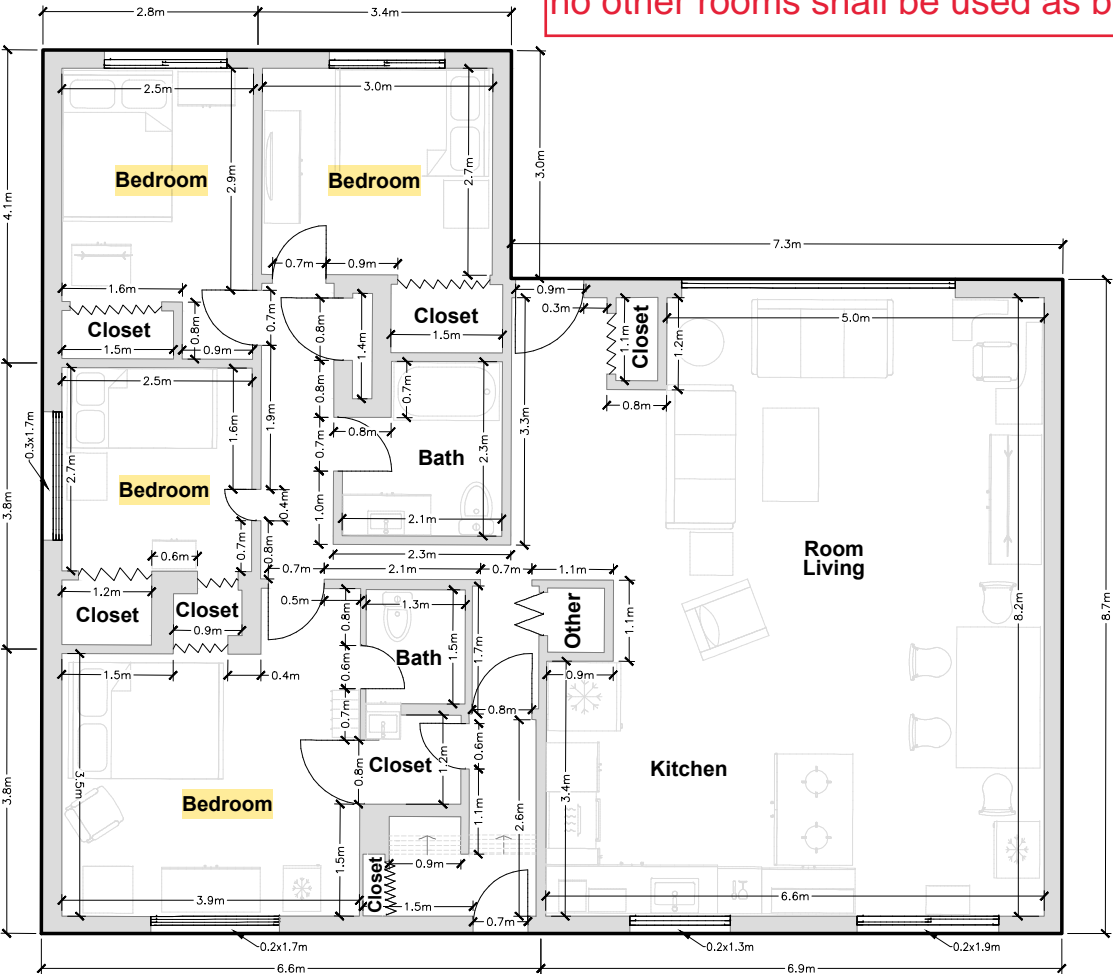
NO.	DESCRIPTION	DATE
0	PLAN ISSUED	11-Aug-25



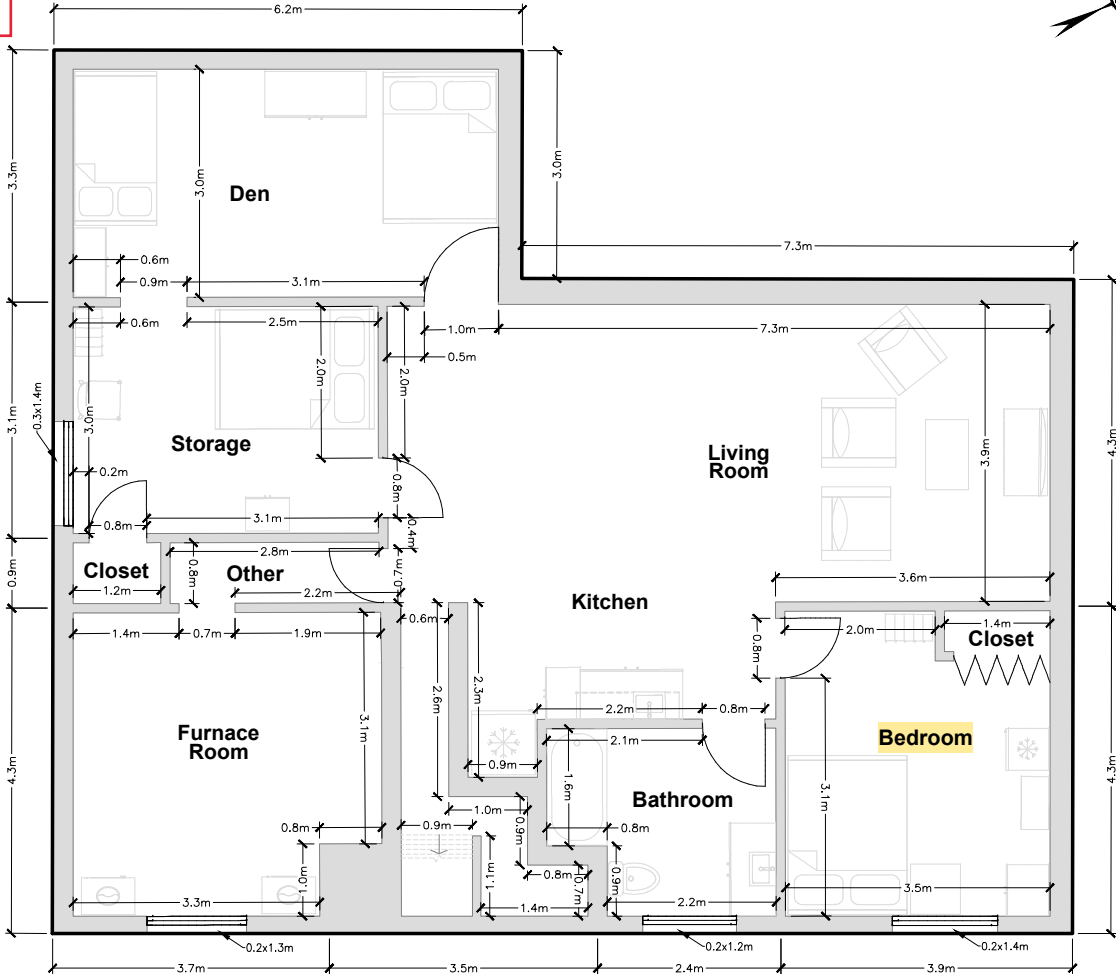
DRAWING TITLE:  
105 HIGHFIELD ST.  
FLOOR PLAN AS-BUILT



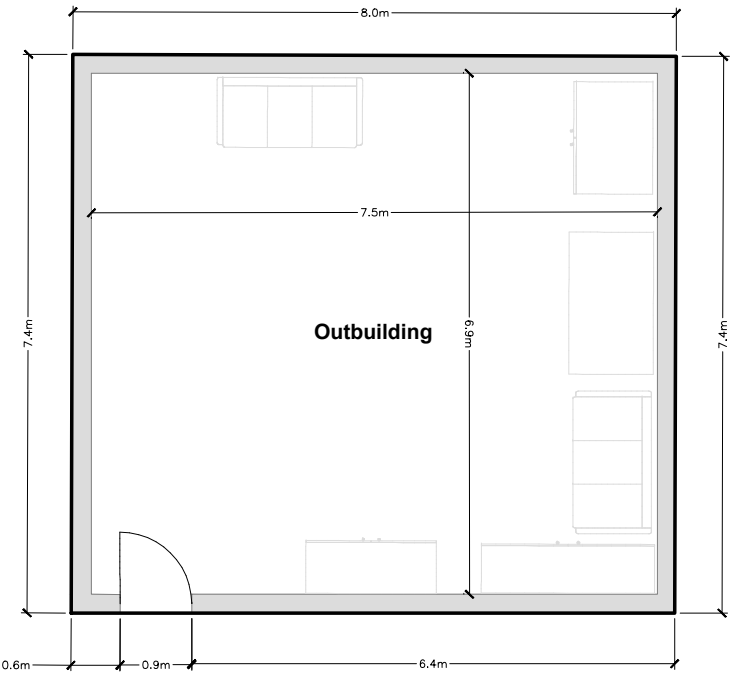
DRAWN BY: KD	SURVEYED BY: BG	REV: 0
DWG NO: LND12358-003-AB_0	EW P NO: 1	
DATE: 11-AUG-2025	SHEET: 4 OF 1	



GROUND FLOOR



BASEMENT



GARAGE

ATIA 20(1)



Thank you for your email and for taking the time to share your questions about the Recovery home at 105 Highfield Street.

The Sakihitowin Recovery Home at this address is intended to provide safe and supportive housing for up to seven adult males who are in recovery from substance use. To help answer your questions:

### **Resident background**

- All residents must be sober when they move in.
- The majority come directly from treatment centres, where they have completed intensive recovery programming.
- Residents are not accepted if they pose a risk to the safety of others. Individuals with convictions related to sexual assault, or anything related to children are **not eligible** for this program.

### **Expectations and support**

- Residents are required to attend regular AA/NA meetings, participate in random drug testing (usually twice a week), and follow an 11:00 p.m. curfew.



- Residents are required to attend regular AA/NA meetings, participate in random drug testing (usually twice a week), and follow an 11:00 p.m. curfew.
- Each resident works on personal recovery goals, including employment readiness and family reunification.
- Staff check in daily, provide counselling, and ensure the home remains a safe, stable environment.

## Purpose of the home

- The home is designed to support people who are committed to their recovery journey.
- It provides up to two years of stable housing where residents can live with peers who are also in recovery, holding each other accountable, building community, and celebrating successes together.

Our goal is to ensure the home not only supports residents but is also a positive part of the neighbourhood. We value open communication with community members, are committed to being good neighbors and are happy to connect further

**Description:**

Recovery Home (sober home), The program is semi structured with a combination of required participation and exercising autonomy and independence. Residents are exposed to traditional recovery paths like mental health counselling and participation in peer support groups as well as provided opportunities for employment & training, education, volunteering, and leisure activities. 90% of the residents we work with are parents. In cases of family system disruption, we work with all parties to facilitate thoughtful family reunification plans. We work with many partner agencies to provide wraparound support with a multi-disciplinary approach to addiction and mental health recovery.

**From:** [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#)  
**To:** [Yvonne Ormson](#)  
**Cc:** [Jolene Wilson](#); [Becca Moores](#); [Nicki Lewis](#)  
**Bcc:** [Abul Azad](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Sober Living House - Development Permit Applications  
**Date:** Tuesday, October 21, 2025 12:01:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [Approved-DP-Drawings 2025-DP-00321.pdf](#)  
[image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)  
[image003.jpg](#)  
[image004.png](#)  
[image005.jpg](#)  
[Notice to Applicant - 2025-DP-00321.pdf](#)

---

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello, Jo-Anne Packham & Team,

I have attached the Approved Development Permit 2025-DP-00321 for the subject property. I have also attached a notice with details regarding the advertisement.

Kindly ensure that the advisory notes and conditions are reviewed thoroughly.

**Attachments:**

1. Approved DP
2. Notice to Applicant

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out.

**Next Steps:**

**1. Safety Codes Permits (if applicable)**

- Includes Building, Electrical, or Plumbing Permits
- Please apply through our Safety Codes department.
- Contact: [permit.inquiries@rmwb.ca](mailto:permit.inquiries@rmwb.ca)

**2. Occupancy Permit:**

- Required prior to operating
- Contact: [permit.inquiries@rmwb.ca](mailto:permit.inquiries@rmwb.ca)

**3. Business License:**

- Apply online after receiving your Occupancy Permit and Fire Inspection: [Business Licences - Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo](#)





**Sent:** October 20, 2025 9:37 AM

**To:** Jo-Anne Packham <[ed@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:ed@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>

**Cc:** Jolene Wilson <[markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; Nicki Lewis <[facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; Becca Moores <[aftercare1@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:aftercare1@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>

**Subject:** RE: Sober Living House - Development Permit Applications

Subject Property:

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

DP application: 2025-DP-00321

Hello, Jo-Anne Packham & Team,

I am finalizing your development permit application, and I require you to annotate the attached floor plan.

1. Reduce the number of proposed bedrooms to five (5) bedrooms.
  - a. Re-label the bedroom floor plans to other uses which may include other uses such as, staff office, library or den.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Friday, October 17, 2025 2:44 PM

**To:** Jo-Anne Packham <[ed@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:ed@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>

**Cc:** Isela Contreras-Dogbe <[Isela.Contreras-Dogbe@rmwb.ca](mailto:Isela.Contreras-Dogbe@rmwb.ca)>; Ermias Amayu <[Ermias.Amayu@rmwb.ca](mailto:Ermias.Amayu@rmwb.ca)>; Danielle Brown <[Danielle.Brown@rmwb.ca](mailto:Danielle.Brown@rmwb.ca)>; Dennis Fraser <[Dennis.Fraser@rmwb.ca](mailto:Dennis.Fraser@rmwb.ca)>; Amanda Owens <[Amanda.Owens@rmwb.ca](mailto:Amanda.Owens@rmwb.ca)>; Jolene Wilson <[markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; Nicki Lewis <[facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; Becca Moores <[aftercare1@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:aftercare1@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; Lauren Golosky <[Lauren.Golosky@rmwb.ca](mailto:Lauren.Golosky@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** RE: Sober Living House - Development Permit Applications

Subject Property:

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello, Jo-Anne Packham,

Thank you for meeting this morning with Planning and Development and IRR to discuss your development permit application 2025-DP-00321 on the subject property.

Following your confirmation to proceed with five (5) parking stalls and corresponding bedroom/resident occupancy, I will issue the Development Approval by no later than Tuesday, October 21, 2025.

The approval will be advertised on Thursday, October 23, 2025, for a period of twenty-one (21) days and may be subject to appeal.

As a side, we are currently reviewing how other municipalities regulate and classify various types of Group Homes. This research may support consideration for an alternative approach. IRR will coordinate a follow-up meeting to discuss further.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Kelly Johnson <[Kelly.Johnson@rmwb.ca](mailto:Kelly.Johnson@rmwb.ca)>  
**Sent:** Friday, October 10, 2025 3:10 PM  
**To:** Yvonne Ormson <[ed@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:ed@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>  
**Cc:** Isela Contreras-Dogbe <[Isela.Contreras-Dogbe@rmwb.ca](mailto:Isela.Contreras-Dogbe@rmwb.ca)>; Ermias Amayu <[Ermias.Amayu@rmwb.ca](mailto:Ermias.Amayu@rmwb.ca)>; Danielle Brown <[Danielle.Brown@rmwb.ca](mailto:Danielle.Brown@rmwb.ca)>; Dennis Fraser <[Dennis.Fraser@rmwb.ca](mailto:Dennis.Fraser@rmwb.ca)>; Amanda Owens <[Amanda.Owens@rmwb.ca](mailto:Amanda.Owens@rmwb.ca)>; Jolene Wilson <[markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; Nicki Lewis <[facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; Becca Moores <[aftercare1@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:aftercare1@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; Lauren Golosky <[Lauren.Golosky@rmwb.ca](mailto:Lauren.Golosky@rmwb.ca)>  
**Subject:** RE: Sober Living House - Development Permit Applications

Good afternoon, Jo-Anne;

I will do my best to accommodate a time in the morning of Friday, October 17<sup>th</sup>, working with both Director Owens and Director Fraser's schedules. If we are unable to accommodate Friday morning, can you please provide your availability for the following week? Amanda will be away from the office on Monday, October 20, and Tuesday, October 21, at a conference, but will be back in the office on Wednesday, October 22.

We look forward to meeting with you.

Best,



**Kelly Johnson** [*she, her, hers*]  
Senior Administrative Assistant  
Office of the Director  
Planning and Development Services  
T : 780-743-7880 | M : 587-919-6551

---

**From:** Jo-Anne Packham <[ed@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:ed@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>  
**Sent:** Friday, October 10, 2025 2:28 PM  
**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>  
**Cc:** Kelly Johnson <[Kelly.Johnson@rmwb.ca](mailto:Kelly.Johnson@rmwb.ca)>; Isela Contreras-Dogbe <[Isela.Contreras-Dogbe@rmwb.ca](mailto:Isela.Contreras-Dogbe@rmwb.ca)>; Ermias Amayu <[Ermias.Amayu@rmwb.ca](mailto:Ermias.Amayu@rmwb.ca)>; Danielle Brown <[Danielle.Brown@rmwb.ca](mailto:Danielle.Brown@rmwb.ca)>; Dennis Fraser <[Dennis.Fraser@rmwb.ca](mailto:Dennis.Fraser@rmwb.ca)>; Amanda Owens <[Amanda.Owens@rmwb.ca](mailto:Amanda.Owens@rmwb.ca)>; Jolene Wilson <[markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; Nicki Lewis <[facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; Becca Moores <[aftercare1@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:aftercare1@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; Lauren Golosky <[Lauren.Golosky@rmwb.ca](mailto:Lauren.Golosky@rmwb.ca)>  
**Subject:** Re: Sober Living House - Development Permit Applications

Thank you Elias,

It was great having you and your colleagues there with us that day. Thank you for coming. I understand the land use by laws and the parameters that you work within, but there are greater community considerations that I feel strongly should be factored in and I would like the opportunity to speak to them.

I will be travelling next week with various commitments that occupy all of Wednesday and Thursday. I can be available in the early morning of the 17th. After 4pm on Thursday the 16<sup>th</sup> could also be possible.

**Jo-Anne Packham, CACC**  
*Prounouns She/Her/Hers*

**Executive Director**

**Wood Buffalo Wellness Society**

Box 5748

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T9H 4V9

[ed@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:ed@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)

P: (780) 334-2398

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[www.woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](http://www.woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)

“We acknowledge that we are located in Nistawoyou, on Treaty 8 territory, traditional home and gathering place of the Cree, Dene and Metis. We honour our journey as Indigenous people and remain committed to our work in addressing the impacts of colonization including addiction and houselessness, felt by all of our relations and our communities today”



---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 9, 2025 6:02 PM  
**To:** Jo-Anne Packham <[ed@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:ed@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>  
**Cc:** Kelly Johnson <[Kelly.Johnson@rmwb.ca](mailto:Kelly.Johnson@rmwb.ca)>; Isela Contreras-Dogbe <[Isela.Contreras-Dogbe@rmwb.ca](mailto:Isela.Contreras-Dogbe@rmwb.ca)>; Ermias Amayu <[Ermias.Amayu@rmwb.ca](mailto:Ermias.Amayu@rmwb.ca)>; Danielle Brown <[Danielle.Brown@rmwb.ca](mailto:Danielle.Brown@rmwb.ca)>; Dennis Fraser <[Dennis.Fraser@rmwb.ca](mailto:Dennis.Fraser@rmwb.ca)>; Amanda Owens <[Amanda.Owens@rmwb.ca](mailto:Amanda.Owens@rmwb.ca)>; Jolene Wilson <[markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; Nicki Lewis <[facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; Becca Moores <[aftercare1@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:aftercare1@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; Lauren Golosky <[Lauren.Golosky@rmwb.ca](mailto:Lauren.Golosky@rmwb.ca)>  
**Subject:** Re: Sober Living House - Development Permit Applications

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2  
Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092  
Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District  
Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello, Jo-Anne Packham,

Thank you for hosting the Open House on Wednesday afternoon and for taking the time to address our questions.

As outlined in the Land Use Bylaw, parking requirements for Group Homes are determined by resident occupancy. Planning and Development Services is committed to ensuring that all development proposals comply with the Land Use Bylaw and reflect sound planning principles

As requested, we would be happy to arrange a meeting with Dennis Fraser, Director of IRR, late next week to further discuss this matter. Please let us know what time works best for you.

We look forward to continuing the conversation and meeting with you soon.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Jo-Anne Packham <[ed@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:ed@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 7, 2025 2:49 PM  
**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>; Jolene Wilson <[markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>  
**Cc:** Abul Azad <[Abul.Azad@rmwb.ca](mailto:Abul.Azad@rmwb.ca)>; Nicki Lewis <[facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; Becca Moores <[aftercare1@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:aftercare1@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; Dennis Fraser <[Dennis.Fraser@rmwb.ca](mailto:Dennis.Fraser@rmwb.ca)>; Lauren Golosky <[Lauren.Golosky@rmwb.ca](mailto:Lauren.Golosky@rmwb.ca)>  
**Subject:** Re: Sober Living House - Development Permit Applications

Hi Elias,

The parking is an issue. In the 13 years we have been running these programs, we have had 6 individuals with vehicles, out of 2000+. Would it not be sufficient to put in place a policy that no more than one individual with a vehicle could be accepted into each home? If we were restricted to 4 individuals in each home, it would essentially mean that we could not gather enough rental revenue to support the payment of rent and utilities for each house, and would ultimately mean that we would have to close the program. The whole purpose in applying for the development permit was so that we could legally go over the four individuals so we could make this program sustainable long term. Because parking is not a credible concern, I am feeling like this is a reasonable consideration. This is the same accommodation to the law that we received for the Tawaw program because there again, our residents do not have vehicles and if they did, they would not be our clients.

What is the requirement that has been set for boarding houses? There is an illegal boarding house on the block just a few houses away from the Bacon Place house. If we have so many illegal boarding houses in Fort McMurray with each worker driving a work truck and we are legitimately offering to restrict our parking usage to a strict acceptance process, how can this be not accommodated? This can easily be legally managed. Aside from Tawaw, There must be other precedence setting cases to consider.

I would also like to bring in this request more formally under the RMWB Reconciliation plan. I feel



like to request to accommodate this consideration for an Indigenous organization who is directly addressing the Intergenerational impact of colonization within the region, all while being in a state of local emergency in addictions and mental Health for Indigenous communities, bears significant merit and should have weight in this consideration. Could we sit with the Director of IRR to discuss this further before a decisions are made?

Please let me know. I will be touching base with IRR to brief them tomorrow.

**Jo-Anne Packham, CACC**

*Prounouns She/Her/Hers*

**Executive Director**

**Wood Buffalo Wellness Society**

Box 5748

Fort McMurray | ᓂᓕᓐᓂᓐᓂᓐ | Nistawâyâw | Ehídlı́ Kué

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[www.woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](http://www.woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)

“We acknowledge that we are located in Nistawoyou, on Treaty 8 territory, traditional home and gathering place of the Cree, Dene and Metis. We honour our journey as Indigenous people and remain committed to our work in addressing the impacts of colonization including addiction and houselessness, felt by all of our relations and our communities today”



---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 7, 2025 11:51 AM  
**To:** Jolene Wilson <[markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>  
**Cc:** Abul Azad <[Abul.Azad@rmwb.ca](mailto:Abul.Azad@rmwb.ca)>; Nicki Lewis <[facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; Jo-Anne Packham <[ed@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:ed@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; Becca Moores <[aftercare1@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:aftercare1@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>  
**Subject:** RE: Sober Living House - Development Permit Applications

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2  
Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092  
Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District  
Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello, Jolene and team,

I have attached my review memo, which includes circulation comments for your reference regarding the subject property. As discussed, please confirm whether you intend to proceed with the required revisions or not.

If you choose not to revise the development permit application, a refusal will be issued. You will then have the right to appeal this decision to the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB), which will make the final determination on the matter.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 7, 2025 11:32 AM  
**To:** 'Jolene Wilson' <[markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>  
**Cc:** Abul Azad <[Abul.Azad@rmwb.ca](mailto:Abul.Azad@rmwb.ca)>; 'Nicki Lewis' <[facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; 'Yvonne Ormson' <[ed@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:ed@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; 'Becca Moores'

<[aftercare1@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:aftercare1@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>

**Subject:** RE: Sober Living House - Development Permit Applications

Subject Property:

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello, Jolene and team,

Per my voicemail, the review for DP application 2025-DP-00321 is complete and requires revisions.

Kindly return my call to discuss.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Monday, September 22, 2025 3:23 PM

**To:** 'Jolene Wilson' <[markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>

**Cc:** Abul Azad <[Abul.Azad@rmwb.ca](mailto:Abul.Azad@rmwb.ca)>; Nicki Lewis <[facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>;

Yvonne Ormson <[ed@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:ed@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>; Becca Moores

<[aftercare1@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:aftercare1@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>

**Subject:** RE: Sober Living House - Development Permit Applications

Discretionary Uses – Planning Commission: Group Home

ATIA 20(1)

2. Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Development Permit Application: 2025-DP-00321

ATIA 20(1)



ATIA 20(1)

Hi Jolene,

I would like to inform you that the three (3) applications have been assigned to me and are currently in the two (2) week circulation. Once the circulation and reviews are complete, questions regarding parking stalls may be contingent on the outcome of your Development Permit approval. For example, what would the process be if most or all residents of your Group Homes had vehicles?

On **Monday, September 29, 2025**, I will issue the circulation comments and planning review assessment for DP application 2025-DP-00321 at 105 Highfield Street.

I will follow up with you regarding the remaining two (2) DP applications on **Monday, October 6, 2025**.

Finally, as a reminder, should the DPs be approved, they will be advertised for 21 days online and via mail to properties within a 60.0-meter radius of the subject property because it's a discretionary use.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Jolene Wilson <[markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 18, 2025 10:25 AM  
**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>  
**Cc:** Abul Azad <[Abul.Azad@rmwb.ca](mailto:Abul.Azad@rmwb.ca)>; Nicki Lewis <[facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>  
**Subject:** Re: Sober Living House - Development Permit Applications

Some do, but not everyone. Usually one or two would.

*Jolene Wilson*  
Pronouns She/Her/Hers  
Administration Manager  
Wood Buffalo Wellness Society  
C: (780) 713-9794  
Box 5748  
Fort McMurray | Nistawâyâw | Elídlí Kue'  
T9H 4V9  
[markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)



[www.woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](http://www.woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)

"We acknowledge that we are located on Treaty 8 territory, traditional home and gathering place of the Cree, Dene and Metis. We humbly respect the histories, languages, and cultures of all Indigenous Peoples of our region and beyond, whose presence continues to enrich our vibrant community."

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 18, 2025 10:22 AM  
**To:** Jolene Wilson <[markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>  
**Cc:** Abul Azad <[Abul.Azad@rmwb.ca](mailto:Abul.Azad@rmwb.ca)>; Nicki Lewis <[facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>  
**Subject:** RE: Sober Living House - Development Permit Applications

Hello, Jolene,

Typically, parking requirements are determined by resident occupancy, so I want to confirm whether the resident(s) will have personal automobiles at the respective Group Homes.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Jolene Wilson <[markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 17, 2025 8:53 AM  
**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>  
**Cc:** Abul Azad <[Abul.Azad@rmwb.ca](mailto:Abul.Azad@rmwb.ca)>; Nicki Lewis <[facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>  
**Subject:** Re: Sober Living House - Development Permit Applications

Hey Elias,

The driveways has adequate parking, no additional parking is required.

Thanks  
Jolene

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---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 16, 2025 4:38:37 p.m.

**To:** Jolene Wilson <[markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>  
**Cc:** Abul Azad <[Abul.Azad@rmwb.ca](mailto:Abul.Azad@rmwb.ca)>; Nicki Lewis <[facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>  
**Subject:** RE: Sober Living House - Development Permit Applications

Hello, Jolene,

I wanted to confirm if the Group Home residents require parking stalls for their personal automobiles.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 11, 2025 1:24 PM  
**To:** [facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:facilities@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)  
**Cc:** Abul Azad <[Abul.Azad@rmwb.ca](mailto:Abul.Azad@rmwb.ca)>; Jolene Wilson <[markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>  
**Subject:** RE: Sober Living House - Development Permit Applications

Discretionary Uses – Planning Commission: Group Home

ATIA 20(1)

ATIA 20(1)

3. Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District  
Development Permit Application: 2025-DP-00321

ATIA 20(1)



ATIA 20(1)

Hello, Nikki Lewis,

Following our brief in-person meeting, kindly amend and provide details as discussed as soon as possible.

Attachments:

1. How to Draw a building plan.
2. ATIA 20(1)
3. ATIA 20(1)

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Jolene Wilson <[markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 28, 2025 9:25 AM  
**To:** TaraChantal Payne <[TaraChantal.Payne@rmwb.ca](mailto:TaraChantal.Payne@rmwb.ca)>  
**Cc:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>  
**Subject:** Re: Sober Living House - Development Permit Applications

Thanks again Tara for all your help.

If you require anything else please let me know.

Take care.

Jolene Wilson  
Pronouns She/Her/Hers  
Administration Manager  
Wood Buffalo Wellness Society  
C: (780) 713-9794  
Box 5748  
Fort McMurray | Nistawâyâw | Elídlí Kue'  
T9H 4V9  
[markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)



Date of Posting:  
October 21, 2025

## Approval of Development Permit 2025-DP-00321

Civic address  
**105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2**

Legal Land Description  
**Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092**

Dear Jo-Anne Packham & Wood Buffalo Wellness Society,

I would like to bring to your attention that this decision is subject to appeal. The deadline for you to file an appeal is twenty-one (21) days from today.

Online advertising and notice delivery to adjacent residents will occur on Thursday, October 23, 2025. The appeal deadline for residents or other interested parties will therefore be Thursday, November 13, 2025.

Please find attached a copy of the notification letter to be delivered to all property owners within a 60-meter radius of the subject property.

If an appeal is filed by the specified date, you will receive notification by mail from the Legislative Services Department of the Municipality.

Should you have any inquiries regarding the appeal process, please do not hesitate to contact the Clerk of the Subdivision & Development Appeal Board at 780-743-7001 or via email at [SDAB@rmwb.ca](mailto:SDAB@rmwb.ca).

Please feel free to reach out if you require further clarification or assistance.

Sincerely,

**ATIA 20(1)**

Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI  
Planner | Development Officer  
M: DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca  
T: 780-793-1017  
Development Planning Branch  
Planning & Development Services





Date of Posting:  
October 23, 2025

## NOTICE TO ADJACENT PROPERTY OWNERS

### Issuance of Development Permit 2025-DP-00321 – Group Home

Civic address

**105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2**

Legal Land Description

**Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092**

The Planner has approved a Development Permit for a Group Home (5-bedroom Adult Recovery Home) at the subject property. The Group Home is required to maintain a residential character and remain in a good state of repair. Also, the Group Home is required to be equipped with functional security cameras around the exterior of the house to enhance safety and security. This Development Permit has been approved on a temporary basis and shall not extend beyond November 1, 2027.

You are notified of this development as a resident within a 60-meter radius of the subject property. You retain the right to appeal this decision to the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board. Should you choose to appeal, a written notice must be submitted to the Secretary of the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) within twenty-one (21) days from this notice, dated October 23, 2025. For further details and to obtain the appeal application form, please contact the Clerk of the Appeal Board.

Subdivision and Development Appeal Board

9909 Franklin Avenue

Fort McMurray AB T9H 2K4

T: 780 743 7001 F: 780 743 7028

Email: [SDAB@rmwb.ca](mailto:SDAB@rmwb.ca)

Questions regarding the appeal process should be directed to the Clerk of the Subdivision & Development Appeal Board. Any significant concerns arising from this notification will be addressed by the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board.

Sincerely,

**ATIA 20(1)**

Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI

Planner | Development Officer

M: [DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)

T: 780-793-1017

Development Planning Branch

Planning & Development Services





SUBJECT AREA MAP  
Notification

9) Notice to Applicant



- Survey Parcels
- Adjacent Properties within 60 m
- Subject Area

105 HIGHFIELD STREET  
Lot 19, Block 42, Plan 7620092





Date of Posting:  
October 23, 2025

## NOTICE TO ADJACENT PROPERTY OWNERS

### Issuance of Development Permit 2025-DP-00321 – Group Home

Civic address

**105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2**

Legal Land Description

**Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092**

The Planner has approved a Development Permit for a Group Home (5-bedroom Adult Recovery Home) at the subject property. The Group Home is required to maintain a residential character and remain in a good state of repair. Also, the Group Home is required to be equipped with functional security cameras around the exterior of the house to enhance safety and security. This Development Permit has been approved on a temporary basis and shall not extend beyond November 1, 2027.

You are notified of this development as a resident within a 60-meter radius of the subject property. You retain the right to appeal this decision to the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board. Should you choose to appeal, a written notice must be submitted to the Secretary of the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) within twenty-one (21) days from this notice, dated October 23, 2025. For further details and to obtain the appeal application form, please contact the Clerk of the Appeal Board.

Subdivision and Development Appeal Board

9909 Franklin Avenue

Fort McMurray AB T9H 2K4

T: 780 743 7001 F: 780 743 7028

Email: [SDAB@rmwb.ca](mailto:SDAB@rmwb.ca)

Questions regarding the appeal process should be directed to the Clerk of the Subdivision & Development Appeal Board. Any significant concerns arising from this notification will be addressed by the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board.

Sincerely,

**ATIA 20(1)**

Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI

Planner | Development Officer

M: [DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)

T: 780-793-1017

Development Planning Branch

Planning & Development Services





- Survey Parcels
- Adjacent Properties within 60 m
- Subject Area

105 HIGHFIELD STREET  
Lot 19, Block 42, Plan 7620092



## 11) Engagement with Residents

#	Street #	Address	Owners	Owners Contact
ATIA 20(1)			Natasha & Terry Hynes Miranda & Darry Russell Dwayne & Kristy Tilley Brenan Stewart Peter Brooks Victoria Sherman Becca Yaworski Richard Armstrong Tom and Nancy Keenan Lisa Stewart Yolanda Murphy Tanya Begin Steve C Kean Melanie Britton Susan Golosky-Nolan Susan Harrison Clay Johnston Suzanne Inglis Jaime Swan Krystal Gardiner Tim Drodge Sara Wanner	ATIA 20(1)
22)				<a href="#">m</a>

(1)

**From:** [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#)  
**To:** **ATIA 20(1)**  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 22, 2025 7:35:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [Notice to Neighbours - 2025-DP-00321.pdf](#)

---

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello,

I have attached the notification letter for your review. It confirms that the application has been approved, and the appeal period is twenty-one (21) days from today. If you wish to submit an appeal, please follow the instructions provided in the attachment.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 2, 2025 4:44 PM  
**To:** Natasha Hynes  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello,

The Wood Buffalo Wellness Society will be hosting an open house to address questions and concerns regarding their Group Homes.

You are invited to attend at the **Unifor Building, 10019 MacDonald Avenue, Fort McMurray (Downtown)** on either of the following dates:

- **October 6, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**
- **October 8, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

This will be a valuable opportunity to share your concerns and have your questions answered in person.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
**Sent:** Friday, September 26, 2025 3:12 PM  
**To:** Natasha Hynes **ATIA 20(1)**  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Natasha,

I have received your concerns and refusal of the application. Should the application be approved, you

will be formally notified and provided a twenty-one (21) day appeal period. If you choose to appeal, you may be asked to appear before the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) to present your concerns regarding the proposed Group Home.

Answers to your comments:

#1 – I will redirect you to the applicant, *Wood Buffalo Wellness Society*, who can provide details on their residents. Their contact information is the following:

- Telephone: (780) 713-9794
- Email: [markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)
- Website: [Wood Buffalo Wellness Society | Home | Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada](#)

#2 – All potential concerns regarding the proposed Group Home must focus exclusively on planning considerations, including land use, intensity, infrastructure, neighbourhood compatibility, and policy compliance.

#3 – Any further enforcement-related inquiries can be directed to our Pulse line using the link provided below.

[Submit A Pulse Ticket - Pulse](#)

#4 – Any crime-related concerns should be directed to our local RCMP branch via 911.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Natasha Hynes <ATIA 20(1)>

**Sent:** Friday, September 26, 2025 3:04 PM

**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** Re: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hi Elias,

I have indeed received your email and I look forward to a response to my concerns and the concerns of my neighbours.

Thank you,

Natasha

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 26, 2025, at 2:47 PM, Elias Biolley-Villalobos

<[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)> wrote:

Hello, Natasha,

Please acknowledge receipt of this email.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Monday, September 22, 2025 12:32 PM

**To:** <ATIA 20(1)>

**Subject:** Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House



Subject Property:

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello, Natasha Hynes,

Thank you for your feedback and for taking the time to share your concerns.

I am the assigned planner currently reviewing the development permit application, which is being circulated among our internal and external partners.

I will respond to your questions before the application is finalized.

For context, Group Homes are considered a discretionary use within the R1 Residential District. Should the application be approved, you will be formally notified and provided a twenty-one (21) day appeal period. If you choose to appeal, you may be asked to appear before the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) to present your concerns regarding the proposed Group Home.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos**

Planner

Planning & Development Services

T: 780-793-1017 | [rmwb.ca](http://rmwb.ca)

Office: 9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB, T9K 2K4

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Alberta T9H 2K4

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-----Original Message-----

From: Natasha Hynes [ATIA 20\(1\)](#)

Sent: Saturday, September 20, 2025 12:40 PM

To: Elias Biolley-Villalobos [DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)

Subject: Group Home Development (105 Highfield Street)

External Message - Please be cautious when opening links or attachments in email

To whom it may concern,

My name is Natasha Hynes and I am the owner of [ATIA 20\(1\)](#).

Myself, my husband and my neighbours within the 60m radius of 105 Highfield Street received a letter to voice any concerns regarding the application for this to become a group home.

Myself and my husband are opposed to the property becoming a group home.

I spend many nights alone in my home [ATIA 20\(1\)](#) with my children, while my husband is away for work. My youngest being a 17 year old female who has to walk past this home to get to her high school. My middle daughter 20 years old, walks by this home to get to her bus for work.

I do not know and will not know the nature of the crimes/ addictions that these men are battling.

---

## 11) Engagement with Residents

I therefore question what safeguards are in place to assure no harm will come to my children or the many other children within our area that have to walk by this home.

Highfield Street and Highfield Cove is a very quiet and family oriented neighbourhood and we want to keep it that way. You cannot give us reassurance that the residents of this house will NEVER cause any issues publicly, criminally, etc..... You cannot guarantee this for us! Therefore we do not agree with converting this residence into a group home.

Thank you,

Natasha Hynes

Sent from my iPhone

(2)

**From:** [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#)  
**To:** **ATIA 20(1)**  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 22, 2025 7:35:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [Notice to Neighbours - 2025-DP-00321.pdf](#)  
[image001.png](#)

---

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello,

I have attached the notification letter for your review. It confirms that the application has been approved, and the appeal period is twenty-one (21) days from today. If you wish to submit an appeal, please follow the instructions provided in the attachment.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Thursday, October 2, 2025 4:44 PM

**To:** Miranda Russell

**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello,

The Wood Buffalo Wellness Society will be hosting an open house to address questions and concerns regarding their Group Homes.

You are invited to attend at the **Unifor Building, 10019 MacDonald Avenue, Fort McMurray (Downtown)** on either of the following dates:

- **October 6, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**
- **October 8, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

This will be a valuable opportunity to share your concerns and have your questions answered in person.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Miranda Russell **ATIA 20(1)** >

**Sent:** Friday, September 26, 2025 2:49 PM

**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** Re: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Message received.



Miranda

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

On Friday, September 26, 2025, 2:48 PM, Elias Biolley-Villalobos

<[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)> wrote:

Hello,

Please acknowledge receipt of this email.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**

Planner | Planning and Development Services

T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Monday, September 22, 2025 12:30 PM

**To:** Miranda Russell <[ATIA 20\(1\)](#)>

**Subject:** Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Subject Property:

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello, Darry & Miranda Russell,

Thank you for your feedback and for taking the time to share your concerns.

I am the assigned planner currently reviewing the development permit application, which is being circulated among our internal and external partners.

For context, Group Homes are considered a discretionary use within the R1 Residential District. Should the application be approved, you will be formally notified and provided a twenty-one (21) day appeal period. If you choose to appeal, you may be asked to appear before the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) to present your concerns regarding the proposed Group Home.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos**



Planner

Planning & Development Services

T: 780-793-1017 | [rmwb.ca](http://rmwb.ca)

Office: 9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB,  
T9K 2K4

Fort McMurray | ᓂᓐᑕᓴᓐᓂᓐ | Nistawâyâw | Etídlı Kué

Alberta T9H 2K4

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*STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY: The information contained in this email message and any attachments may be confidential and legally privileged and is for the use of the intended recipient(s) only. If you are not an intended recipient, please: (1) notify me immediately by replying to this message; (2) do not use, disseminate, distribute or reproduce any part of the message or any attachment; and (3) destroy all copies of this message and any attachments. Thank you.*

---

**From:** Miranda Russell [ATIA 20\(1\)](#) >

**Sent:** Sunday, September 21, 2025 12:10 PM

**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** Letter of opposition to development permit 2025-DP-00321 for a group Home

Good afternoon,

Please see the attached letter outlining my concerns regarding development permit 2025-DP-00321 at 105 Highfield Street. I strongly encourage this application be denied based on the items noted in the letter. Feel free to contact me at either the phone number or email listed in the attachment.

Kindest Regards,

Miranda Russell

Darry & Miranda Russell

ATIA 20(1)

ATIA 20(1)

September 21, 2025

Planning & Development Department  
Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo  
9909 Franklin Avenue  
Fort McMurray, AB

Subject: Opposition to Proposed Group Home at 105 Highfield Street

Dear Elias Biolley-Villalobos,

I am writing to formally oppose the proposed development of a group home at 105 Highfield Street. As a resident of this quiet residential neighbourhood, I have serious concerns regarding safety, supervision, parking, and the encroachment of non-residential uses in areas intended for single-family residential living. Below are my specific objections, supported by reference to Land Use Bylaw No. 26/001 and observed issues at the subject property.

## Concerns

1. Lack of Adequate Supervision / Enforcement of Rules
  - a. The group home's own rules for supervision have not been adhered to in the past. Instances of unsupervised individuals or inadequate oversight have already been observed from this property. In the early hours of August 29th, 2025, there was an incident of individuals residing at the property consuming drugs on the front lawn in full view of witnesses. Video coverage of this incident is available for review if requested.
  - b. This raises the risk to both residents and neighbors: potential for noise, trespassing, altercations, or other public safety concerns.



### 2. Safety Issues

- a. With multiple individuals residing in the home (up to seven) plus a supervisor, the property needs to meet specific safety and oversight standards. If supervision is lax, then emergency response, trespass, fire risk, or liability issues could arise.
- b. As this is a residential area, high traffic (foot or vehicular), late night comings & goings, or other disturbances are likely to disrupt the peace, increase danger, or reduce safety for children or elderly neighbors.

### 3. Parking Constraints

- a. The proposed group home does not have sufficient on-site parking to accommodate up to seven residents plus staff / supervision.
- b. Under Bylaw 26/001, minimum parking stall requirements must be met unless a variance is granted. In cases of uses with higher than typical traffic or vehicle visits, a parking study may be required. [RMWB+2RMWB+2](#)
- c. Inadequate parking will lead to overflow onto neighboring streets, causing congestion and safety hazards (e.g., obstructed sight lines, emergency vehicle access issues).

### 4. Land Use / Character of the Area

- a. This is a quiet single-family residential neighborhood; introduction of a group home transforms a dwelling into a quasi-commercial or institutional use with multiple non-related occupants plus staff.
- b. It may change the character of the street, increase noise, traffic, and reduce privacy for residents.

### 5. Compliance with Bylaw No. 26/001

- a. The Land Use Bylaw regulates uses, supervision, parking, and development standards. Proposed development must conform to these. [RMWB+2RMWB+2](#)
- b. The proposal fails to satisfy (or there is lack of evidence to show full compliance with) the following:
  - a. Parking stall minimums. [RMWB+1](#)
  - b. Supervision / care protocols expected in group home settings (both in terms of personnel, hours, oversight).
  - c. Any impact assessments required by the bylaw (traffic, parking) if the use is greater intensity than typical residential.

## Request

Given these concerns, I respectfully request that the Planning & Development Department:

- Deny the application as it fails to meet important criteria under Bylaw 26/001, particularly around parking, supervision, and preserving the residential character.
- If not denied outright, then stronger conditions are required including:
  - A detailed supervision plan (how many staff, what hours, how oversight is enforced).
  - A traffic and parking study to assess the real impact, with a commitment to providing sufficient on-site parking.
  - Guarantees in writing (covenants or binding agreements) that the group home will adhere to its own rules, with enforcement / monitoring.
  - Restrictions on hours of operation or number of people, to keep it consistent with low density residential zoning.

Kindest Regards,

Darry & Miranda Russell

**From:** [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#)  
**To:** **ATIA 20(1)**  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House  
**Date:** Tuesday, October 21, 2025 10:01:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [Notice to Neighbours - 2025-DP-00321.pdf](#)  
[image001.png](#)

---

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello,

I have attached the notification letter for your review. It confirms that the application has been approved, and the appeal period is twenty-one (21) days from today. If you wish to submit an appeal, please follow the instructions provided in the attachment.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
 Planner | Planning and Development Services  
 T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Thursday, October 2, 2025 4:45 PM

**To:** Dwayne Tilley

**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello,

The Wood Buffalo Wellness Society will be hosting an open house to address questions and concerns regarding their Group Homes.

You are invited to attend at the **Unifor Building, 10019 MacDonald Avenue, Fort McMurray (Downtown)** on either of the following dates:

- **October 6, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**
- **October 8, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

This will be a valuable opportunity to share your concerns and have your questions answered in person.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
 Planner | Planning and Development Services  
 T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Monday, September 22, 2025 5:33 PM

**To:** 'Dwayne Tilley' <**ATIA 20(1)**>

**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Dwayne,



The subject property was previously an enforcement file that has since been transferred to Planning & Development Services. Any further enforcement-related inquiries can be directed to our Pulse line using the link provided below.

Please note that all potential concerns regarding the proposed Group Home must focus exclusively on planning considerations, including land use, intensity, infrastructure, neighbourhood compatibility, and policy compliance.

As previously stated, should the application be approved, you will be formally notified and provided a twenty-one (21) day appeal period.

[Submit A Pulse Ticket - Pulse](#)

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Dwayne Tilley <ATIA 20(1)>

**Sent:** Monday, September 22, 2025 5:20 PM

**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** Re: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hi there.

For my 1st point, will there be any repercussions for having this group home set up without receiving previous approval? Like I said, this group home has been established for quite some time.

As for my 3rd point. The house was ATIA 20(1). The house is now vacant, but I did see one of the recovery residents from 105 highfield on the property the day after the police removed the squatters from ATIA 20(1). I asked him what he was doing there, and he said he was helping clean up, which I thought was odd. The house is now vacated and the property owner is getting ready to sell. Lot's of police documentation on file from this house.

Dwayne

On Sep 22, 2025, at 12:24, Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
<[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)> wrote:

Subject Property:

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello, Dwayne Tilley,

Thank you for your feedback and for taking the time to share your concerns.

I am the assigned planner currently reviewing the development permit application, which is being circulated among our internal and external partners. Please see my responses to your questions below:

1. *Why is this only being acknowledged now? This home has been set up like*

*this for maybe 2 years already.*

The applicant was informed that a development permit is required for the Group Home.

2. *What safeguards are in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the residents around this house? Highfield Street and Highfield Cove has a lot of kids that openly play on the island adjacent to the dwelling.*

The notification letter is intended to gather information from the community to ensure neighbourhood concerns are considered during the review process.

3. *We just went through a massive ordeal dealing with a rental next door to me that became a crackhouse. This was an ongoing battle for nearly 6-months that finally got resolved just a few weeks ago. We do not want this in our neighborhood ever again. This entire ordeal created a lot of anxiety to the residents because of what went on there. The stealing, the fighting, the drugs, the late nights, the police, etc.....*

Please confirm the property address and provide any additional details for the record.

For context, Group Homes are considered a discretionary use within the R1 Residential District. Should the application be approved, you will be formally notified and provided a twenty-one (21) day appeal period. If you choose to appeal, you may be asked to appear before the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) to present your concerns regarding the proposed Group Home.

Thank you kindly.



**Elias Biolley-Villalobos**

Planner

Planning & Development Services

T: 780-793-1017 | [rmwb.ca](http://rmwb.ca)

Office: 9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB,  
T9K 2K4

Fort McMurray | ᓄᓐᓕᓕᓐᓂᓐ | Nistawâyâw | Eᓱᓯᓴᓐ Kuᑭ  
Alberta T9H 2K4

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-----Original Message-----

From: Dwayne Tilley **ATIA 20(1)**

Sent: Saturday, September 20, 2025 4:44 PM

To: Elias Biolley-Villalobos [DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)

Subject: Re: 105 Highfield Street - Development Permit Application

External Message - Please be cautious when opening links or attachments in email

Hello again!

This is a statement from another neighbour that has direct line of sight on the house at 105 Highfield Street. She asked to remain anonymous.

"Ok. I'm not posting this publicly but will talk to anyone who cares to know. I and a few others **witnessed a resident purchasing drugs from two dealers on motorcycles**. He

## 11) Engagement with Residents

then blazed for about 15 minutes. Don't know what drug but large fireball so I can only assume crack or crystal meth. Another resident came out and did the same. I didn't witness the second person but others did. The person I assume is The resident "uncle" came out and knew what was going on. I have been waiting for 2 residents to leave as per Tawawa's guidelines. Nobody has left so the safety checks and drug tests they claim they do failed".

Because of this, I do not support the group home at 105 Highfield Street. There's problems here and it's not welcomed in my neighborhood.

Dwayne

> On Sep 20, 2025, at 10:00, Dwayne Tilley ATIA 20(1) wrote:

>

> Good morning.

>

> My name is Dwayne Tilley and I am the owner of ATIA 20(1).

>

> Myself and my neighbours within the 60m radius of 105 Highfield Street received a letter to voice any concerns regarding the application for this to become a group home.

>

> On behalf of my neighbours and I, we have concerns that we would like answered. I will list them in point form.

>

> 1. Why is this only being acknowledged now? This home has been set up like this for maybe 2 years already.

>

> 2. What safeguards are in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the residents around this house? Highfield Street and Highfield Cove has a lot of kids that openly play on the island adjacent to the dwelling.

>

> 3. We just went through a massive ordeal dealing with a rental next door to me that became a crackhouse. This was an ongoing battle for nearly 6-months that finally got resolved just a few weeks ago. We do not want this in our neighborhood ever again. This entire ordeal created a lot of anxiety to the residents because of what went on there. The stealing, the fighting, the drugs, the late nights, the police, etc.....

>

> Highfield Street and Highfield Cove is a very quiet and family oriented neighborhood and we want to keep it that way. We want reassurance that the residents of this house will NEVER cause any issues publicly, criminally, etc..... If you cannot guarantee this for us, we do not agree with converting this residence into a group home.

>

>

> Dwayne



**From:** [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#)  
**To:** **ATIA 20(1)**  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House  
**Date:** Tuesday, October 21, 2025 9:41:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[Notice to Neighbours - 2025-DP-00321.pdf](#)

---

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello,

I have attached the notification letter for your review. It confirms that the application has been approved, and the appeal period is twenty-one (21) days from today. If you wish to submit an appeal, please follow the instructions provided in the attachment.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
 Planner | Planning and Development Services  
 T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Thursday, October 2, 2025 5:04 PM

**To:** 'Brenan Stewart'

**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello,

The Wood Buffalo Wellness Society will be hosting an open house to address questions and concerns regarding their Group Homes.

You are invited to attend at the **Unifor Building, 10019 MacDonald Avenue, Fort McMurray (Downtown)** on either of the following dates:

- **October 6, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**
- **October 8, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

This will be a valuable opportunity to share your concerns and have your questions answered in person.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
 Planner | Planning and Development Services  
 T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Brenan Stewart **ATIA 20(1)** >

**Sent:** Friday, September 26, 2025 3:20 PM

**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** Re: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

I have received this email.

On Fri, Sep 26, 2025, 2:49 p.m. Elias Biolley-Villalobos

<[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)> wrote:

Hello,

Please acknowledge receipt of this email.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Monday, September 22, 2025 12:28 PM

**To:** 'Brenan Stewart' <[ATIA 20\(1\) \[REDACTED\]](mailto:ATIA 20(1) [REDACTED])>

**Subject:** Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Subject Property:

Civic Address: [105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2](#)

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello, Brenan Stewart,

Thank you for your feedback and for taking the time to share your concerns.

I am the assigned planner currently reviewing the development permit application, which is being circulated among our internal and external partners.

I will respond to your questions before the application is finalized.

For context, Group Homes are considered a discretionary use within the R1 Residential District.

Should the application be approved, you will be formally notified and provided a twenty-one (21) day appeal period. If you choose to appeal, you may be asked to appear before the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) to present your concerns regarding the proposed Group Home.

Thank you kindly.



**Elias Biolley-Villalobos**

Planner

Planning & Development Services

T: 780-793-1017 | [rmwb.ca](mailto:rmwb.ca)

Office: [9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB, T9K 2K4](#)

[Fort McMurray](#) | ᓄᓐᑕᓄᓐᓂᓐ | Nistawâyâw | Etłłj Kué  
Alberta T9H 2K4

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**From:** Brenan Stewart [ATIA 20\(1\)](#) >  
**Sent:** Saturday, September 20, 2025 10:33 AM  
**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>  
**Subject:** Group home

Good morning,

I am reaching out regarding the group home currently being developed at [105 highfield st](#). As a nearby resident, I want to express my concern and ask for clarification about the type of facility and the individuals who will be residing there.

My primary concern relates to the safety and security of the neighborhood as this is a street with lots of children playing. Could you please provide more information on:

The type of residents who will be placed in this home.

Whether residents will be screened prior to placement.

The level of supervision or staff presence on-site.

How issues related to safety, noise, or loitering will be addressed.

I recognize the importance of supportive housing and community services, but as a homeowner and neighbor, I feel it is important to understand how this development may impact safety and security of the neighbourhood

Thanks



(5)

**From:** [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#)  
**To:** **ATIA 20(1)**  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House  
**Date:** Thursday, October 23, 2025 9:23:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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Understood. Thank you.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

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**From:** Peter brooks

**Sent:** Thursday, October 23, 2025 7:53 PM

**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Subject:** Re: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

You will be getting my appeal as I am sure it will not change the decision of the corrupt city council.

Thank you

Peter

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Sent:** Thursday, October 23, 2025 8:00:00 AM

**To:** Peter brooks <**ATIA 20(1)**>

**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Subject Property:

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello,

I have attached the notification letter for your review. It confirms that the application has been approved, and the appeal period is twenty-one (21) days from today. If you wish to submit an appeal, please follow the instructions provided in the attachment.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Thursday, October 2, 2025 4:55 PM

**To:** Peter brooks **ATIA 20(1)** >

**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello,

The Wood Buffalo Wellness Society will be hosting an open house to address questions and concerns regarding their Group Homes.

You are invited to attend at the **Unifor Building, 10019 MacDonald Avenue, Fort McMurray**

(Downtown) on either of the following dates:

- **October 6, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**
- **October 8, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

This will be a valuable opportunity to share your concerns and have your questions answered in person.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Peter brooks <ATIA 20(1)>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 26, 2025 3:19 PM  
**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>  
**Subject:** Re: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Received, thank you.

Thank you  
Peter

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 26, 2025 2:49:36 PM  
**To:** Peter brooks <ATIA 20(1)>  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello,

Please acknowledge receipt of this email.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 23, 2025 8:30 PM  
**To:** Peter brooks <ATIA 20(1)>  
**Subject:** Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Subject Property:

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello, Peter Brooks,

Thank you for your feedback and for taking the time to share your concerns.

I am the assigned planner currently reviewing the development permit application, which is being circulated among our internal and external partners.

For context, Group Homes are considered a discretionary use within the R1 Residential District.

Should the application be approved, you will be formally notified and provided a twenty-one (21) day appeal period. If you choose to appeal, you may be asked to appear before the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) to present your concerns regarding the proposed Group Home. Thank you kindly.



**Elias Biolley-Villalobos**

Planner

Planning & Development Services

T: 780-793-1017 | [rmwb.ca](http://rmwb.ca)

Office: 9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB,  
T9K 2K4

Fort McMurray | ᓂᓐᑕᓴᓐᓂᓐ | Nistawâyâw | Etídlj Kué  
Alberta T9H 2K4

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---

**From:** Peter brooks <ATIA 20(1)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, September 23, 2025 4:22 PM

**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** Opposition letter highfield street

Thank you

Peter



Peter Brooks

ATIA 20(1)

ATIA 20(1)

ATIA 20(1)

September 22, 2025

Planning & Development Department  
Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo  
9909 Franklin Avenue  
Fort McMurray, AB

Subject: Opposition to Proposed Group Home at 105 Highfield Street

Dear Elias Biolley-Villalobos,

I am writing to formally oppose the proposed development of a group home at 105 Highfield Street. As a resident of this quiet residential neighbourhood, I have serious concerns regarding safety, supervision, parking, and the encroachment of non-residential uses in areas intended for single-family residential living. Below are my specific objections, supported by reference to Land Use Bylaw No. 26/001 and observed issues at the subject property.

## Concerns

1. Lack of Adequate Supervision / Enforcement of Rules
  - a. The group home's own rules for supervision have not been adhered to in the past. Instances of unsupervised individuals or inadequate oversight have already been observed from this property. In the early hours of August 29th, 2025, there was an incident of individuals residing at the property consuming drugs on the front lawn in full view of witnesses. Video coverage of this incident is available for review if requested.
  - b. This raises the risk to both residents and neighbors: potential for noise, trespassing, altercations, or other public safety concerns.
2. Safety Issues

- a. With multiple individuals residing in the home (up to seven) plus a supervisor, the property needs to meet specific safety and oversight standards. If supervision is lax, then emergency response, trespass, fire risk, or liability issues could arise.
  - b. As this is a residential area, high traffic (foot or vehicular), late night comings & goings, or other disturbances are likely to disrupt the peace, increase danger, or reduce safety for children or elderly neighbors.
- 3. Parking Constraints
  - a. The proposed group home does not have sufficient on-site parking to accommodate up to seven residents plus staff / supervision.
  - b. Under Bylaw 26/001, minimum parking stall requirements must be met unless a variance is granted. In cases of uses with higher than typical traffic or vehicle visits, a parking study may be required. [RMWB+2RMWB+2](#)
  - c. Inadequate parking will lead to overflow onto neighboring streets, causing congestion and safety hazards (e.g., obstructed sight lines, emergency vehicle access issues).
- 4. Land Use / Character of the Area
  - a. This is a quiet single-family residential neighborhood; introduction of a group home transforms a dwelling into a quasi-commercial or institutional use with multiple non-related occupants plus staff.
  - b. It may change the character of the street, increase noise, traffic, and reduce privacy for residents.
- 5. Compliance with Bylaw No. 26/001
  - a. The Land Use Bylaw regulates uses, supervision, parking, and development standards. Proposed development must conform to these. [RMWB+2RMWB+2](#)
  - b. The proposal fails to satisfy (or there is lack of evidence to show full compliance with) the following:
    - a. Parking stall minimums. [RMWB+1](#)
    - b. Supervision / care protocols expected in group home settings (both in terms of personnel, hours, oversight).
    - c. Any impact assessments required by the bylaw (traffic, parking) if the use is greater intensity than typical resident.

### Additional concern

Operating this business for 2 years without a license to operate as a Group Home is also an issue.

### Request

Given these concerns, I respectfully request that the Planning & Development Department / Council:

- Deny the application as it fails to meet important criteria under Bylaw 26/001, particularly around parking, supervision, and preserving the residential character.
- If not denied outright, then stronger conditions are required including:
  - A detailed supervision plan (how many staff, what hours, how oversight is enforced).
  - A traffic and parking study to assess the real impact, with a commitment to providing sufficient on-site parking.
  - Guarantees in writing (covenants or binding agreements) that the group home will adhere to its own rules, with enforcement / monitoring.
  - Restrictions on hours of operation or number of people, to keep it consistent with low density residential zoning.



(6)

**From:** [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#)  
**To:** [ATIA 20\(1\)](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 22, 2025 7:34:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[Notice to Neighbours - 2025-DP-00321.pdf](#)

---

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello,

I have attached the notification letter for your review. It confirms that the application has been approved, and the appeal period is twenty-one (21) days from today. If you wish to submit an appeal, please follow the instructions provided in the attachment.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Thursday, October 2, 2025 4:55 PM

**To:** YMM Dental .

**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello,

The Wood Buffalo Wellness Society will be hosting an open house to address questions and concerns regarding their Group Homes.

You are invited to attend at the **Unifor Building, 10019 MacDonald Avenue, Fort McMurray (Downtown)** on either of the following dates:

- **October 6, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**
- **October 8, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

This will be a valuable opportunity to share your concerns and have your questions answered in person.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** YMM Dental . <[ATIA 20\(1\)](#)>

**Sent:** Thursday, September 25, 2025 10:08 AM

**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** Re: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello Elias,



**Subject:** 105 Highfield Street Group Home

I am replying to a notice Regarding a group home at 105 Highfield Street.

I bought my home in 1996 the address is [REDACTED] I am the longest property owner on this street.

I would like to know as this property ( 105 Highfield Street ) has been operating as a group home the last two years and we are only being informed of this now? Why did you pick my street as compared to other areas of town? We have a lot of kids living on this street. We are very close to Father Merc school.

I am strongly against this property being turned into a group home. The property value of my home will decrease because of this group home on my street. People will not buy in this area because of the group home I myself for one. There is a potential possibility of the crime rate rising in this area.

There are seven males living in the home now over the age of 18 and not enough adequate parking for this many adults living in this house, we already have a problem with parking as it is.

I also take pride in our property outside and have noticed the property at [REDACTED] has been neglected regarding lawn maintenance and over growth of trees.

I strongly believe you cannot guarantee my safety living next door to this group home as there will be a huge turn over in residents and possibly staff and for that reason I strongly reject this property being turned into a group home. You can also reach me at [REDACTED] if you have any questions.

Victoria Sherman

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



From: [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#)  
 To: **ATIA 20(1)** ATIA 20(1)  
 : Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House  
 Date: Wednesday, October 22, 2025 8:41:00 PM  
 Attachments: [Notice to Neighbours - 2025-DP-00321.pdf](#)

---

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello,

I have attached the notification letter for your review. It confirms that the application has been approved, and the appeal period is twenty-one (21) days from today. If you wish to submit an appeal, please follow the instructions provided in the attachment.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
 Planner | Planning and Development Services  
 T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Thursday, October 2, 2025 4:55 PM

**To:** Becca Yaworski

**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello,

The Wood Buffalo Wellness Society will be hosting an open house to address questions and concerns regarding their Group Homes.

You are invited to attend at the **Unifor Building, 10019 MacDonald Avenue, Fort McMurray (Downtown)** on either of the following dates:

- **October 6, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**
- **October 8, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

This will be a valuable opportunity to share your concerns and have your questions answered in person.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
 Planner | Planning and Development Services  
 T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Becca Yaworski <**ATIA 20(1)**>

**Sent:** Thursday, September 25, 2025 6:39 PM

**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** Re: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello Elias,

Thank you for your response. We are really grateful for the due diligence you all take in

considering these things.

Our address is **ATIA 20(1)**

If you need anything else from us, please let me know.

Becca Yaworski

On Sep 24, 2025, at 2:28 PM, Elias Biolley-Villalobos

<[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)> wrote:

Subject Property:

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello, Becca Yaworski,

Thank you for your feedback and for taking the time to share your concerns.

Would you be comfortable sharing your property address to add to the list of respondents?

I am the assigned planner currently reviewing the development permit application, which is being circulated among our internal and external partners.

For context, Group Homes are considered a discretionary use within the R1 Residential District. Should the application be approved, you will be formally notified and provided a twenty-one (21) day appeal period. If you choose to appeal, you may be asked to appear before the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) to present your concerns regarding the proposed Group Home.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos**

Planner

Planning & Development Services

T: 780-793-1017 | [rmwb.ca](http://rmwb.ca)

Office: 9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB, T9K 2K4

Fort McMurray | ᓄᓐᑕᑦᑭᓐᓂᓐ | Nistawâyâw | Etídlj Kué

Alberta T9H 2K4

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To whom it may concern,

We received a development permit notice for adjacent home owners regarding the application: 2025-DP-00321.

While I do not know all that is taken into consideration when granting these permits, I thought it would be worthwhile sharing my experience as a new home owner (1.5hrs) in the area with this property and ones close by.

I walk our dogs in the area regularly, and anytime I've interacted with the occupants of the noted property, I've always left with an unsettled feeling from the

interaction. They often chosen to discuss excessive alcohol consumption and made comments about what I've been wearing. I only find comfort knowing I have two big dogs as protection. If these are the people running the group home, I would be concerned what level of accountability would be held for the occupants.

Across the road and down a bit at ATIA 20(1) there was a significant domestic abuse situation this summer that woke my wife and I at 3 in the morning, and resulted in 3 police cars and an ambulance to take care of the woman who had been attacked.

While I believe group homes are a great place for people to rehabilitate, I'm not certain our neighbourhood (brimming with children), this particular home, and this street is the best place to create such an environment.

We love our neighbourhood and feel lucky to have made it home. We trust that the RMWB will take into consideration all of the insights from the area when considering if this is the best place for such an establishment for the safety and health of everyone involved.

Thank you for giving us the space to express our concerns.

Becca Yaworski

Sent from my iPhone



**From:** [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#)  
**To:** **ATIA 20(1)**  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 22, 2025 8:43:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[Notice to Neighbours - 2025-DP-00321.pdf](#)

---

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello,

I have attached the notification letter for your review. It confirms that the application has been approved, and the appeal period is twenty-one (21) days from today. If you wish to submit an appeal, please follow the instructions provided in the attachment.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
 Planner | Planning and Development Services  
 T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Thursday, October 2, 2025 4:55 PM

**To:** Richard Armstrong

**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello,

The Wood Buffalo Wellness Society will be hosting an open house to address questions and concerns regarding their Group Homes.

You are invited to attend at the **Unifor Building, 10019 MacDonald Avenue, Fort McMurray (Downtown)** on either of the following dates:

- **October 6, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**
- **October 8, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

This will be a valuable opportunity to share your concerns and have your questions answered in person.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
 Planner | Planning and Development Services  
 T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Richard Armstrong **ATIA 20(1)** >

**Sent:** Friday, September 26, 2025 3:05 PM

**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** Re: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Received.



2025-DP-00321.

As the home owner, NO, I don't not agree with this application, and will never agree.

Lots of available real estate downtown, or Gregoire.

Please confirm receipt of this email.

Richard Armstrong

---

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(9)

**From:** [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#)  
**To:** **ATIA 20(1)**  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 22, 2025 8:43:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[Notice to Neighbours - 2025-DP-00321.pdf](#)

---

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello,

I have attached the notification letter for your review. It confirms that the application has been approved, and the appeal period is twenty-one (21) days from today. If you wish to submit an appeal, please follow the instructions provided in the attachment.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 2, 2025 4:55 PM  
**To:** Nancy Keenan  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello,

The Wood Buffalo Wellness Society will be hosting an open house to address questions and concerns regarding their Group Homes.

You are invited to attend at the **Unifor Building, 10019 MacDonald Avenue, Fort McMurray (Downtown)** on either of the following dates:

- **October 6, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**
- **October 8, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

This will be a valuable opportunity to share your concerns and have your questions answered in person.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
**Sent:** Monday, September 29, 2025 9:08 AM  
**To:** 'Nancy Keenan' <**ATIA 20(1)**>  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House  
Duly noted.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Nancy Keenan <ATIA 20(1)>  
**Sent:** Saturday, September 27, 2025 7:32 AM  
**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>  
**Subject:** Re: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Thank you so much for your reply. I appreciate you taking the time to answer our questions. The fact that this home is already running without the proper permits does not give me a lot of hope that they are interested in following the rules governing this venture. I remain concerned about this home running in our neighbourhood, and am further concerned that it will not be supervised.

We do not support having this group home in this location.

Thank you,

Tom & Nancy Keenan

On Friday, September 26, 2025, Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
<[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)> wrote:

Hello,  
Please acknowledge receipt of this email.  
Thank you kindly.  
**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 24, 2025 9:41 PM  
**To:** Nancy Keenan <ATIA 20(1)>  
**Subject:** Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2  
Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092  
Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District  
Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello, Tom and Nancy Keenan,

Thank you for your feedback and for taking the time to share your concerns.

I am the assigned planner currently reviewing the development permit application, which is being circulated among our internal and external partners.

Answers to your questions:

*1) Is the Group Home already operating?*

Yes, the subject property was operating without the appropriate permits from the Municipality.

*2) Will it be supervised 24/7?*

The Group Home will not be supervised or have in-house staff.

3) Are the residents recovering from drug addiction? Are they people with histories of crime or violence? What is the demographic of people eligible to live in this house? How will this affect the resale value of our homes?

All potential concerns regarding the proposed Group Home must focus exclusively on planning considerations, including land use, intensity, infrastructure, neighbourhood compatibility, and policy compliance.

The applicant, *Wood Buffalo Wellness Society*, is better suited to address your inquiries regarding the Group Home users. Their contact information is the following:

- Telephone: (780) 713-9794
- Email: [markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)
- Website: [Wood Buffalo Wellness Society | Home | Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada](#)

For context, Group Homes are considered a discretionary use within the R1 Residential District. Should the application be approved, you will be formally notified and provided a twenty-one (21) day appeal period. If you choose to appeal, you may be asked to appear before the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) to present your concerns regarding the proposed Group Home. Thank you kindly.



## Elias Biolley-Villalobos

## Planner

## Planning & Development Services

T: 780-793-1017 | [rmwb.ca](http://rmwb.ca)

Office: [9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB, T9K 2K4](#)

Fort McMurray | ᓂᓕᓐᓂᓐ | Nistawâyâw | Ełıdłı Kué  
Alberta T9H 2K4

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**From:** Nancy Keenan <ATIA 20(1)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, September 24, 2025 7:43 PM

**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** [105 Highfield Street](#)

Good Evening,

I am writing in regard to the application for a Group Home on Highfield Street in [Fort McMurray](#). As a longtime resident of this neighbourhood, I do have some concerns regarding the location of this program.

Our neighbourhood is inhabited mainly by families, many (including my own) with young children. I am concerned that this Group Home has the potential to invite criminal activity into our area. Truly, any single family home housing seven adult males would be a cause for concern amongst most parents. The fact that this home will be a designated group home is concerning, and will give me pause as my children head out to play.

I do have a few questions about the property. In the spirit of transparency, I am curious to



know if the Home is already currently operating? Will it be supervised 24/7? Are the residents recovering from drug addiction? Are they people with histories of crime or violence? What is the demographic of people eligible to live in this house? How will this affect the resale value of our homes? I am quite certain that potential buyers would not be eager to buy a home a few doors down from such a facility.

I understand the need for such a program, but feel that a residential area surrounded by young families is not a good fit for this Home. I am opposed to having this program run in our neighbourhood.

Thank you,

Tom and Nancy Keenan

ATIA 20(1)

**From:** [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#)  
**To:** **ATIA 20(1)**  
**Subject:** RE: Development Permits - Group Home  
**Date:** Monday, November 3, 2025 8:28:00 AM

---

Good morning Lisa,

Answers to your questions:

1. A letter of authorization (LOA) granting permission for the applicant to submit a change-of-use development permit application. Group Home uses are a discretionary use of the planning commission; therefore, community engagement and circulation are required.
2. Once a development permit application is submitted, a property file review is completed to ensure compliance with the Land Use Bylaw.
3. Should there be a community concern of any kind, please [Submit A Pulse Ticket - Pulse](#)
4. That question may be subject to the Access to Information Act (ATIA). Please redirect your question to Pulse and [Submit A Pulse Ticket - Pulse](#)
5. That question may be subject to the Access to Information Act (ATIA). Please redirect your question to Pulse and [Submit A Pulse Ticket - Pulse](#)
6. That question may be subject to the Access to Information Act (ATIA). Please redirect your question to Pulse and [Submit A Pulse Ticket - Pulse](#)

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
 Planner | Development Permitting  
 Planning and Development Services  
**T: 780-793-1071**

---

**From:** Lisa Stewart

**Sent:** Sunday, November 2, 2025 9:51 PM

**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Subject:** Development Permits - Group Home

Hello Elias,

I am seeking information on the following:

- The requirements of a landlord renting to a group home - sober living home, non profit or business and the appropriate permits required. For example, the requirement of the current landlord at 105 Highfield St. renting to WBWS and the responsibility of that landlord to be in compliance with RMWB bylaws and land use.
- The process to determine if a landlord is in compliance with bylaws and land use.
- The process for residents should a landlord not be in compliance with appropriate bylaws and land use.
- Addresses of all current applications along with the Development Permit #'s for all group homes - sober living homes currently in process for the City of Fort McMurray.
- Can you inform me if there any approved or development permit applications for group

home - sober living homes in process for the rest of the RMWB.

- Any development permits that were not granted or successfully appealed for group homes-sober living homes and the addresses of those development permits.

Thank you.

*Lisa Stewart*

**ATIA 20(1)**



**From:** [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#)  
**To:** **ATIA 20(1)**  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House  
**Date:** Tuesday, October 21, 2025 9:19:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [Notice to Neighbours - 2025-DP-00321.pdf](#)  
[image001.png](#)

---

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello,

I have attached the notification letter for your review. It confirms that the application has been approved, and the appeal period is twenty-one (21) days from today. If you wish to submit an appeal, please follow the instructions provided in the attachment.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Lisa Stewart

**Sent:** Friday, October 10, 2025 3:11 PM

**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Subject:** Re: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Thank you very much for your prompt reply

Lisa Stewart

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Sent:** Friday, October 10, 2025 3:00:41 PM

**To:** Lisa Stewart **ATIA 20(1)** >

**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello, Lisa,

Please see my answers to your questions below:

1) *Can you please advise how many development applications have been approved for Ross Residences and how many applications are in process?*

- Ross Residence has submitted two (2) Development Permit applications.
- There are no approved Group Homes development permits for Ross Residence.

2) *Secondly, can you please confirm if it was a Ross Residence home on Bell Crescent which burned down sometime in the past 2 years?*

I am not aware of that information.

- Please redirect your question to Ross Residence.

3) Thirdly, if the group home in Bell Crescent was not a Ross Residence can you please advise who was operating the group home and if an approved permit was in place?

- According to the property file, there are no development permits for a group home on that street.

4) Also can you please advise of the requirements should Ross Residences sublet their approved properties to Wood Buffalo Wellness Society?

- That matter does not fall under land use planning. If another provider or operator wishes to operate a Group Home at an approved property, there are no additional land use requirements.

5) Lastly, can you please advise of the outcome and/or the process for the appeal heard this past week on the development application for Gravelstone?

- I have attached the Development Permit 2025-DP-00162 at 213 Gravelstone Way for your review.
- The SDAB hearing is scheduled for **Thursday, November 13, 2025**, as indicated in the link below.
- [SDAB 2025-004 Appeal Against the Approval of a Development Permit for a Change of Use - Group Home | Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo](#)

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Lisa Stewart <[ATIA 20\(1\)](#)>

**Sent:** Friday, October 10, 2025 10:56 AM

**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** Re: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Good morning Elias,

Can you please advise how many development applications have been approved for Ross Residences and how many applications are in process? Secondly, can you please confirm if it was a Ross Residence home on Bell Crescent which burned down sometime in the past 2 years? Thirdly, if the group home in Bell Crescent was not a Ross Residence can you please advise who was operating the group home and if an approved permit was in place? Also can you please advise of the requirements should Ross Residences sublet their approved properties to Wood Buffalo Wellness Society? Lastly, can you please advise of the outcome and/or the process for the appeal heard this past week on the development application for Gravelstone?

Much appreciated.

Lisa Stewart

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**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Sent:** Friday, October 3, 2025 9:01:54 AM

**To:** Lisa Stewart <ATIA 20(1)>

**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Good morning, Lisa,

Answers to your questions:

1. There is one (1) approved Development Permit, located at the former Bridgeport Hotel, 10021 Biggs Avenue, in downtown.
2. There are currently four (4) applications under circulation and review for at least two (2) for comments and feedback.
3. The initial mail-out was a courtesy circulation to residents for a period of two (2) weeks.
  - a. The required mail-out notice occurs once a decision has been made, and a twenty-one (21) day appeal period is granted, giving residents the right to appeal.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Lisa Stewart <ATIA 20(1)>

**Sent:** Thursday, October 2, 2025 11:25 PM

**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** Re: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Thank you for the information. I am not available. I have reviewed their website and faq section. Can you please confirm how many permits for Wood Buffalo Wellness Society currently has for approved group homes and how many are in process for review? I am aware of 3 at the moment. Secondly, can you please confirm how much notice is to be given to stakeholders when these applications are made.

Thank you

Lisa Stewart

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**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Sent:** Thursday, October 2, 2025 3:55:31 PM

**To:** Lisa Stewart <ATIA 20(1)>

**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello,

The Wood Buffalo Wellness Society will be hosting an open house to address questions and concerns regarding their Group Homes.

You are invited to attend at the **Unifor Building, 10019 MacDonald Avenue, Fort McMurray (Downtown)** on either of the following dates:

- **October 6, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**
- **October 8, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM**



This will be a valuable opportunity to share your concerns and have your questions answered in person.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Lisa Stewart <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 26, 2025 9:53 PM  
**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>  
**Subject:** Re: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Received, thank you.

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**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 26, 2025 2:52:20 PM  
**To:** Lisa Stewart [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello,

Please acknowledge receipt of this email.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 24, 2025 11:15 PM  
**To:** Lisa Stewart [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Subject Property:

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello, Lisa Stewart,

Thank you for your feedback and for taking the time to share your concerns.

I am the assigned planner currently reviewing the development permit application, which is being circulated among our internal and external partners.

For context, Group Homes are considered a discretionary use within the R1 Residential District.

Should the application be approved, you will be formally notified and provided a twenty-one (21) day appeal period. If you choose to appeal, you may be asked to appear before the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) to present your concerns regarding the proposed Group Home.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos**  
Planner  
Planning & Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017 | [rmwb.ca](http://rmwb.ca)



Office: 9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB,  
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Alberta T9H 2K4

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**From:** Lisa Stewart <ATIA 20(1)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 24, 2025 10:58 PM  
**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>  
**Subject:** Application 2025-DP-00321

Please see attached

Thank you.

Lisa Stewart

ATIA 20(1)

Lisa Stewart

ATIA 20(1)



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September 24, 2025

Planning & Development  
Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo  
9909 Franklin Ave.  
Fort McMurray, AB

Dear Elias Biolley-Villalobos

Subject: Opposition to Proposed Group Home at 105 Highfield St.

I am writing to formally oppose the proposed development of a group home at 105 Highfield St. I have reviewed the development permit process outlined on the RMWB website, and I am confused as to why only 1 week's notice to respond was provided. I believe, as a homeowner, I would be considered a stakeholder. Stakeholder review states the application should be in circulation for a minimum of 2 weeks for review opportunity to provide comments. I am aware that 2 of the members of our small community impacted by this notice are away on holidays. It has been incumbent upon us to try to contact them to allow for a response. Only 1 has been contacted. I am concerned that a lack of response does not accurately reflect their potential opposition.

I am concerned that Wood Buffalo Wellness Society has taken this long to properly apply for the operations of a group home. I believe that this group home has been in operation for at least 1.5 – 2 years. In fact, I do not know if any of the residents impacted by development permit were even aware of organization operating the group home or who to reach out to if there were any concerns. This has not built trust between WBWS and the neighbourhood. If WBWS was not the operator, please advise me of such.

As a 26 year resident of the quiet, residential neighbourhood, I have serious concerns regarding safety, supervision, parking and the encroachment of non-residential uses in areas intended for single-family residential living. Below are my specific objections, supported by reference to Land Use Bylaw No. 26/001 and observed issues at the subject property.

Concerns:

1. Lack of Adequate Supervision/Enforcement of Rules



- a. The sober living home's rules as per the Wood Buffalo Wellness Society website have not been adhered to. Most recently, on evening of the 29<sup>th</sup> into the 30<sup>th</sup> of August, there was an incident two individuals that came out of the sober living home and consumed drugs on the front lawn in full view of at least 3 homes and 4 eyewitnesses. Home security camera coverage of this incident is available for review if requested. As per the rules outlined by WBWS, these individuals should have been removed from the sober living home. They were not and continue to reside there today. This demonstrates either a lack of non-compliance to WBWS own rules, or a lack of safety/security/supervision which is purported to be in place.
  - b. This raises the risk to both residents and neighbours: potential for noise, trespassing, drug trafficking, altercations or other public safety concerns.
2. Safety Issues
  - a. The group home with 7 individuals, plus all the support staff that are required as outlined in the WBWS website who are required to oversee and support the individuals, creates higher traffic (foot or vehicular), disturbances, increase of danger, and reduces the safety for our children and elderly in the neighbourhood. There are many young families on the street with many small children. I personally choose this neighbourhood due to the quiet, safe streets with a big cul de sac so that my children would be able to play outdoors in a safe, spacious environment.
3. Parking Constrains
  - a. The proposed group home does not have sufficient on site parking to accommodate 7 residents plus staff/supervision.
  - b. Under Bylaw 26/001, minimum parking stall requirements must be met unless a variance is granted. In cases of uses with higher than typical traffic or vehicle visits, a parking study may be required.
  - c. Inadequate parking will lead to overflow onto neighbouring streets, causing congestion and safety hazards (eg obstructed sight lines, emergency vehicle access issues)
4. Land Use/Character of the Area
  - a. This is a quiet single family residential neighborhood; introduction of a sober living home transforms a dwelling into a quasi-commercial or institutional use with multiple non-related occupants plus staff.
  - b. It may change the character of the street, increase noise, traffic and reduce privacy for residents. As someone who lives directly across the street, this has impacted me personally.
5. Compliance with Bylaw No 26/001
  - a. The Land Use Bylaw regulates uses, supervision, parking and development standards. Proposed development must conform to these.

- b. The proposal fails to satisfy (or there is lack of evidence to show full compliance with) the following:
  - a. Parking stall minimums
  - b. Supervision/care protocols expected in group home settings
  - c. Any impact assessments required by the bylaw (traffic, parking) if the use is greater intensity than typical residential.

### Request

Given these concerns, I respectfully request that the Planning & Development/Council:

Deny the application as it fails to meet important criteria under Bylaw 26/001, particularly around parking, supervision and preserving the residential character.

Sincerely,

Lisa Stewart

(11)

**From:** [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#)  
**To:** **ATIA 20(1)**  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 22, 2025 8:41:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [Notice to Neighbours - 2025-DP-00321.pdf](#)

---

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello,

I have attached the notification letter for your review. It confirms that the application has been approved, and the appeal period is twenty-one (21) days from today. If you wish to submit an appeal, please follow the instructions provided in the attachment.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 2, 2025 4:56 PM  
**To:** Yolanda Murphy  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello,

The Wood Buffalo Wellness Society will be hosting an open house to address questions and concerns regarding their Group Homes.

You are invited to attend at the **Unifor Building, 10019 MacDonald Avenue, Fort McMurray (Downtown)** on either of the following dates:

- **October 6, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**
- **October 8, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

This will be a valuable opportunity to share your concerns and have your questions answered in person.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Yolanda Murphy <**ATIA 20(1)**>  
**Sent:** Saturday, September 27, 2025 8:40 AM  
**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>  
**Subject:** Re: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Receipt acknowledged.

Yolanda Murphy



Sent from Yo's iPhone

On Sep 26, 2025, at 2:52 PM, Elias Biolley-Villalobos

<[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)> wrote:

Hello,

Please acknowledge receipt of this email.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Thursday, September 25, 2025 1:23 PM

**To:** 'Yolanda Murphy' <[ATIA 20\(1\)](#)>

**Subject:** Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Subject Property:

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello, Yolanda Murphy,

Thank you for your feedback and for taking the time to share your concerns.

I am the assigned planner currently reviewing the development permit application, which is being circulated among our internal and external partners.

For context, Group Homes are considered a discretionary use within the R1 Residential District. Should the application be approved, you will be formally notified and provided a twenty-one (21) day appeal period. If you choose to appeal, you may be asked to appear before the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) to present your concerns regarding the proposed Group Home.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos**

Planner

Planning & Development Services

T: 780-793-1017 | [rmwb.ca](http://rmwb.ca)

Office: 9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB, T9K 2K4

Fort McMurray | ᓄᓐᑕᓕᓴᓐᓂᓐ | Nistawâyâw | Etídlj Kué  
Alberta T9H 2K4

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---

**From:** Yolanda Murphy <[ATIA 20\(1\)](#)>

**Sent:** Thursday, September 25, 2025 12:10 PM

**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** Development Permit Application: 2025 – DP – 00321

**Attention:** Elias Biolley - Villalobos

I am responding to the development permit application 2025 – DP – 00321 application for a group home at 105 Highfield St., Fort McMurray Alberta T9H3T2. As a very long-standing member of this neighbourhood who has put considerable time and energy into maintaining a respectable area of our city, I very strongly do NOT support this application.

This is a residential area not a business unit area.

We currently do not have many incidents of concerning matter, and there are a considerable number of younger children in the area who can be easily influenced by the actions of others. In addition, there is a high school within close proximity and those students would be potentially exposed to high risk behaviours. In addition, I feel that it should be noted: The neighbourhood is aware of the activities of a residence in very close proximity to the proposed group home that already draws a considerable amount of negative attention. To consider putting high risk individuals across the street from this makes zero sense whatsoever. I believe a group home is intended to help others, not lead them to the path of trouble.

While I do fully understand that group homes are necessary to help those in need, however in the centre of a residential area is not the appropriate placement for such an establishment.

I truly hope consideration is given to all of the residents in the area and the negative effects this could potentially pose for a residential neighbourhood. This would be putting our neighbourhood at risk and subjecting small children to a negative environment.

We as a community work hard to shield our children from unnecessary exposure to negative effects and opening “the next door neighbours” house to this is not viable or fair.

Please feel free to reach out via email or phone 780.799.6101 should you wish to discuss further.

I am confident the city will act on behalf of all tax paying residents when rendering a decision on the above noted matter.

Please confirm receipt of this communication.

Sincerely,

Yolanda Murphy

ATIA 20(1)

Sent from Yo's iPhone

(12)

**From:** [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#)  
**To:** **ATIA 20(1)**  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 22, 2025 8:42:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [Notice to Neighbours - 2025-DP-00321.pdf](#)

---

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello,

I have attached the notification letter for your review. It confirms that the application has been approved, and the appeal period is twenty-one (21) days from today. If you wish to submit an appeal, please follow the instructions provided in the attachment.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 2, 2025 4:56 PM  
**To:** Tanya Begin  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello,

The Wood Buffalo Wellness Society will be hosting an open house to address questions and concerns regarding their Group Homes.

You are invited to attend at the **Unifor Building, 10019 MacDonald Avenue, Fort McMurray (Downtown)** on either of the following dates:

- **October 6, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**
- **October 8, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

This will be a valuable opportunity to share your concerns and have your questions answered in person.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Tanya Begin **ATIA 20(1)** >  
**Sent:** Friday, September 26, 2025 5:24 PM  
**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>  
**Subject:** Re: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Yes I received the email.

Sent from my iPhone



On Sep 26, 2025, at 2:52 PM, Elias Biolley-Villalobos

<[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)> wrote:

Hello,

Please acknowledge receipt of this email.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Thursday, September 25, 2025 2:45 PM

**To:** Tanya Begin <[ATIA 20\(1\)](#)>

**Subject:** Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello, Tanya Bégin,

Thank you for your feedback and for taking the time to share your concerns.

I am the assigned planner currently reviewing the development permit application, which is being circulated among our internal and external partners.

For context, Group Homes are considered a discretionary use within the R1 Residential District. Should the application be approved, you will be formally notified and provided a twenty-one (21) day appeal period. If you choose to appeal, you may be asked to appear before the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) to present your concerns regarding the proposed Group Home.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos**

Planner

Planning & Development Services

T: 780-793-1017 | [rmwb.ca](http://rmwb.ca)

Office: 9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB, T9K 2K4

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Alberta T9H 2K4

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---

**From:** Tanya Begin <[ATIA 20\(1\)](#)>

**Sent:** Thursday, September 25, 2025 2:40 PM

**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** Development permit application 2025 – DP – 00321

Dear Elias Derbe / City Planning Committee,

I am writing to strongly oppose the application for a group home in our neighborhood that would house men 18 and older in addiction recovery. While I understand there is a need for these types of facilities, this location is entirely inappropriate and deeply concerning for the families who live here.

Our neighborhood is a family-centered, residential community filled with children. The idea of placing this type of home here is frightening to many of us. We as residents would have no knowledge of who is being placed in the home, no information about their backgrounds, and no assurances regarding past criminal activity. This lack of transparency creates a real sense of fear for parents and families who simply want to feel safe in their own community.

Additionally, this is not a business district. Allowing this type of facility in a residential neighborhood undermines the very character of the community we have worked so hard to build. Our neighborhood is a sought-after area, and introducing this home will almost certainly bring down property values. Families have invested their life savings here, and this decision could jeopardize both our financial security and our peace of mind.

I must also ask: what recourse do we, as residents, have when — not if — an incident occurs? Who will take responsibility when the safety and security of our children and families are compromised? These are serious questions that deserve clear answers before such an application is even considered.

I cannot stress enough that this group home does not belong in our neighborhood. Please take the concerns of the families who actually live here into account and reject this application.

Sincerely,

Tanya Bégin

ATIA 20(1)

Sent from my iPhone

(13)

**From:** [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#)  
**To:** ATIA 20(1)  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 22, 2025 8:42:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [Notice to Neighbours - 2025-DP-00321.pdf](#)

---

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello,

I have attached the notification letter for your review. It confirms that the application has been approved, and the appeal period is twenty-one (21) days from today. If you wish to submit an appeal, please follow the instructions provided in the attachment.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 2, 2025 4:56 PM  
**To:** 'Steve Kean'  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello,

The Wood Buffalo Wellness Society will be hosting an open house to address questions and concerns regarding their Group Homes.

You are invited to attend at the **Unifor Building, 10019 MacDonald Avenue, Fort McMurray (Downtown)** on either of the following dates:

- **October 6, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**
- **October 8, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

This will be a valuable opportunity to share your concerns and have your questions answered in person.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Steve Kean ATIA 20(1) >  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 30, 2025 3:12 PM  
**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>  
**Subject:** Re: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Received



On Sep 30, 2025, at 3:09 PM, Elias Biolley-Villalobos

<[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)> wrote:

Hello,

Please acknowledge receipt of this email.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Thursday, September 25, 2025 8:45 PM

**To:** ATIA 20(1)

**Subject:** Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Subject Property:

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello, Steve,

Thank you for your feedback and for taking the time to share your concerns.

I am the assigned planner currently reviewing the development permit application, which is being circulated among our internal and external partners.

For context, Group Homes are considered a discretionary use within the R1 Residential District. Should the application be approved, you will be formally notified and provided a twenty-one (21) day appeal period. If you choose to appeal, you may be asked to appear before the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) to present your concerns regarding the proposed Group Home.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos**

Planner

Planning & Development Services

T: 780-793-1017 | [rmwb.ca](mailto:rmwb.ca)

Office: 9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB, T9K 2K4

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Alberta T9H 2K4

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---

**From:** Cisco Unity Connection Messaging System <[unityconnection@rmwb.ca](mailto:unityconnection@rmwb.ca)>

**Sent:** Thursday, September 25, 2025 5:20 PM

**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** Message from Unknown sender (ATIA 20(1) )

(14)

**From:** [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#)  
**To:** **ATIA 20(1)**  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 22, 2025 7:35:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [Notice to Neighbours - 2025-DP-00321.pdf](#)

---

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello,

I have attached the notification letter for your review. It confirms that the application has been approved, and the appeal period is twenty-one (21) days from today. If you wish to submit an appeal, please follow the instructions provided in the attachment.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 2, 2025 4:56 PM  
**To:** 'Melanie Dearden'  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello,

The Wood Buffalo Wellness Society will be hosting an open house to address questions and concerns regarding their Group Homes.

You are invited to attend at the **Unifor Building, 10019 MacDonald Avenue, Fort McMurray (Downtown)** on either of the following dates:

- **October 6, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**
- **October 8, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

This will be a valuable opportunity to share your concerns and have your questions answered in person.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Melanie Dearden <**ATIA 20(1)**>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 1, 2025 8:28 PM  
**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>  
**Subject:** Re: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hi Elias,

Thank you for your message. My address is **ATIA 20(1)** and I received the notice at my

door regarding the permit application.

Best regards,

Melanie

Sent via mobile device.

On Sep 30, 2025, at 3:01 PM, Elias Biolley-Villalobos

<[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)> wrote:

Hello,

I'm following up on this.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**

Planner | Planning and Development Services

T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Friday, September 26, 2025 2:54 PM

**To:** **ATIA 20(1)** >

**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello,

Please acknowledge receipt of this email.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**

Planner | Planning and Development Services

T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Thursday, September 25, 2025 8:50 PM

**To:** **ATIA 20(1)**

**Subject:** Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Subject Property:

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello, Melanie Britton,

Thank you for your feedback and for sharing your concerns.

Would you be comfortable sharing your property address to add to the list of respondents?

I am the assigned planner currently reviewing the development permit application, which is being circulated among our internal and external partners.

Answers to your comments:

#1 – I will redirect you to the applicant, *Wood Buffalo Wellness Society*. Their contact information is the following:

- Telephone: (780) 713-9794
- Email: [markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)
- Website: [Wood Buffalo Wellness Society | Home | Fort McMurray, Alberta.](#)



### Canada

#2 – The Group Home will not be supervised or have in-house staff.

#3 – All potential concerns regarding the proposed Group Home must focus exclusively on planning considerations, including land use, intensity, infrastructure, neighbourhood compatibility, and policy compliance.

For context, Group Homes are considered a discretionary use within the R1 Residential District. Should the application be approved, you will be formally notified and provided a twenty-one (21) day appeal period. If you choose to appeal, you may be asked to appear before the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) to present your concerns regarding the proposed Group Home.

Thank you kindly.

#### **Elias Biolley-Villalobos**

Planner

Planning & Development Services

T: 780-793-1017 | [rmwb.ca](http://rmwb.ca)

Office: 9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB, T9K 2K4

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Alberta T9H 2K4

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-----Original Message-----

From: Melanie Dearden **ATIA 20(1)**

Sent: Thursday, September 25, 2025 5:40 PM

To: Elias Biolley-Villalobos [DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)

Subject: RE Permit for Group Home 105 Highfield St

External Message - Please be cautious when opening links or attachments in email

Good evening,

I am writing to express my concern regarding the notice of a development permit for a group home at **105 Highfield Street**. It is my understanding according to the Wood Buffalo Wellness Society website that this will house recovering drug addicts.

I have serious concerns regarding the safety of my young children who play in the adjacent park. I feel this will compromise the safety of the neighbourhood and devalue the homes in the area.

Please consider an alternate location for this initiative.

Thank you,

Melanie Britton

**ATIA 20(1)**

Sent via mobile device.

(15)

**From:** [Kelly Johnson](#) on behalf of [Amanda Owens](#)  
**To:** **ATIA 20(1)**  
**Cc:** [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#); [CAO](#); [Mayor](#); [Isela Contreras-Dogbe](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Opposition to Permit for Sober Living/Group Home in Residential Area – Concerns from a Lifelong Resident  
**Date:** Thursday, October 9, 2025 3:21:45 PM  
**Attachments:** [image002.jpg](#)

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Good afternoon, Ms. Nolan;

Thank you for your email sharing your concerns regarding the proposed group home at 105 Highfield Street. Your email has been forwarded to the Director of Planning and Development Services, for response.

The application for the proposed group home is currently in circulation and is being reviewed by internal departments and external agencies. We can confirm that no decision has been made at this time. Once the review process is complete, a final decision will be made and appropriate notification will be sent. Please note, although informing residents prior to a decision being made is not a requirement, the Municipality has done so in the interest of transparency and community engagement.

The subject property is zoned R1 – Single Detached Residential District, in which a Group Home is listed as a discretionary use. This means that the Municipality must review the application against the Land Use Bylaw (LUB), any relevant plans, and potential neighbourhood impacts before rendering a decision. Any decision made by Planning & Development Services on development proposals can be appealed within twenty-one (21) days from the date of the decision to the Subdivisions and Development Appeal Board (SDAB).

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to the Planner assigned to this file, Elias Biolley-Villalobos at [derbeelias.biolleyvillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:derbeelias.biolleyvillalobos@rmwb.ca) or 780-743-1017, or to Isela Contreras-Dogbe, Acting Manager, Development Planning Department, at [isela.contreras-dogbe@rmwb.ca](mailto:isela.contreras-dogbe@rmwb.ca), or 780-743-7815.

Thank you,

Logo



**Kelly Johnson** [*she, her, hers*]

On Behalf of

**Amanda Haitas, Director**

Planning and Development Services

**T:** 780-743-7880 **M :** 587-919-6551

[kelly.johnson@rmwb.ca](mailto:kelly.johnson@rmwb.ca)

9909 Franklin Avenue

Fort McMurray | ᓄᓐᑕᓐᓴᓐᓴᓐ | Nistawâyâw | Etídlı Kué  
 Alberta T9H 2K4

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**I humbly acknowledge that we are located on Treaty 8 Land, the traditional territory of the Cree and Dene, and Métis peoples.**

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---

**From:** Susan Nolan **ATIA 20(1)** >

**Sent:** Friday, October 3, 2025 8:08 AM

**To:** Mayor <[Mayor@rmwb.ca](mailto:Mayor@rmwb.ca)>; Councillor Ken Ball <[Ken.Ball@rmwb.ca](mailto:Ken.Ball@rmwb.ca)>; Councillor Funky Banjoko <[Funky.Banjoko@rmwb.ca](mailto:Funky.Banjoko@rmwb.ca)>; Councillor Lance Bussieres <[Lance.Bussieres@rmwb.ca](mailto:Lance.Bussieres@rmwb.ca)>; Councillor Allan Grandison <[Allan.Grandison@rmwb.ca](mailto:Allan.Grandison@rmwb.ca)>; Councillor Stu Wigle <[Stu.Wigle@rmwb.ca](mailto:Stu.Wigle@rmwb.ca)>; Councillor Kendrick Cardinal <[Kendrick.Cardinal@rmwb.ca](mailto:Kendrick.Cardinal@rmwb.ca)>

**Cc:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** Opposition to Permit for Sober Living/Group Home in Residential Area – Concerns from a Lifelong Resident

Dear Mayor and Councillors,

I am writing to formally voice my opposition to the proposed permit for a sober living/group home within my residential community. I have attached a detailed letter outlining the full extent of my concerns for your review and records.

As a lifelong Métis resident of Fort McMurray, with family roots and taxpayers in this region for over 125 years, I find it deeply troubling that permits of this nature are being pushed through without adequate notice or time for residents to respond. It is unacceptable that families are only made aware of such significant developments at the last minute, limiting our ability to participate in the decision-making process that directly affects our neighbourhoods.

The planning department appears to be increasingly dismissive of community input and the character of long-standing residential areas. This worrying trend — allowing group homes, sober living facilities, and additional residential structures on single-family lots (Proposed in the New LUB (No. 26/001) Starting Jan 1, 2026)— undermines the integrity and safety of neighbourhoods designed for families.

We are not opposed to necessary services being provided in our region, but they must be introduced with careful consideration and appropriate community consultation — not at the expense of residential stability or child and family safety.

The RMWB is supposed to serve and represent the people — the very residents whose taxes fund its operations. It is unacceptable that we feel that we are being rushed through the process, when we raise legitimate concerns about our homes, our families, and our community's future.

I respectfully urge council to reconsider the direction this planning trend is taking and to reject the permit for this facility within our single-family neighbourhood.

Sincerely,

Susan Golosky-Nolan

ATIA 20(1)

**From:** [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#)  
**To:** **ATIA 20(1)**  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 22, 2025 8:41:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [Notice to Neighbours - 2025-DP-00321.pdf](#)

---

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello,

I have attached the notification letter for your review. It confirms that the application has been approved, and the appeal period is twenty-one (21) days from today. If you wish to submit an appeal, please follow the instructions provided in the attachment.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 2, 2025 4:56 PM  
**To:** Susan Nolan  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello,

The Wood Buffalo Wellness Society will be hosting an open house to address questions and concerns regarding their Group Homes.

You are invited to attend at the **Unifor Building, 10019 MacDonald Avenue, Fort McMurray (Downtown)** on either of the following dates:

- **October 6, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**
- **October 8, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

This will be a valuable opportunity to share your concerns and have your questions answered in person.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
**Sent:** Monday, September 29, 2025 9:02 AM  
**To:** 'Susan Nolan' **ATIA 20(1)** >  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Received, thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**



Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

-----Original Message-----

From: Susan Nolan <ATIA 20(1)>

Sent: Friday, September 26, 2025 7:45 PM

To: Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

Subject: 105 Highfield Street/Letter-of-opposition-for-RMWB-Development-Permit-Application-2025-DP-00321

External Message - Please be cautious when opening links or attachments in email

To Whom It May Concern

I am resending my letter of opposition with the address included in the Subject line, as per your email.

Sincerely

Susan Golosky-Nolan

---

**From:** Susan Nolan <ATIA 20(1)>

**Sent:** Friday, September 26, 2025 5:16 PM

**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** Re: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

I have received this email.

On Sep 26, 2025, at 2:54 PM, Elias Biolley-Villalobos

<[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)> wrote:

Hello,

Please acknowledge receipt of this email.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**

Planner | Planning and Development Services

T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Thursday, September 25, 2025 9:52 PM

**To:** 'Susan Nolan' <ATIA 20(1)>

**Subject:** Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Subject Property:

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello, Susan Golosky-Nolan,

Thank you for your feedback and for sharing your concerns.

I am the assigned planner currently reviewing the development permit application, which is being circulated among our internal and external partners.

Answers to your comments:

#1 – I will redirect you to the applicant, *Wood Buffalo Wellness Society*, who can

provide details on their residents. Their contact information is the following:

- Telephone: (780) 713-9794
- Email: [markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)
- Website: [Wood Buffalo Wellness Society | Home | Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada](#)

#2 – The Group Home will not be supervised or have in-house staff.

#3 – All potential concerns regarding the proposed Group Home must focus exclusively on planning considerations, including land use, intensity, infrastructure, neighbourhood compatibility, and policy compliance.

For context, Group Homes are considered a discretionary use within the R1 Residential District. Should the application be approved, you will be formally notified and provided a twenty-one (21) day appeal period. If you choose to appeal, you may be asked to appear before the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) to present your concerns regarding the proposed Group Home.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos**

Planner

Planning & Development Services

T: 780-793-1017 | [rmwb.ca](http://rmwb.ca)

Office: 9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB, T9K 2K4

Fort McMurray | ᓄᓐᑕᓕᓴᓐᓄᓐ | Nistawâyâw | Etídlj Kué  
Alberta T9H 2K4

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*STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY: The information contained in this email message and any attachments may be confidential and legally privileged and is for the use of the intended recipient(s) only. If you are not an intended recipient, please: (1) notify me immediately by replying to this message; (2) do not use, disseminate, distribute or reproduce any part of the message or any attachment; and (3) destroy all copies of this message and any attachments. Thank you.*

---

**From:** Susan Nolan <[ATIA 20\(1\)](#)>

**Sent:** Thursday, September 25, 2025 9:45 PM

**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** Letter-of-opposition-for-RMWB-Development-Permit-Application-2025-DP-00321-for-a-Group-Home

External Message - Please be cautious when opening links or attachments in email

To Whom It May Concern

Please find attached a letter of opposition for the proposed Group/Sober Living Home for 105 Highfield Street.

Sincerely

Susan Golosky-Nolan

Susan Golosky-Nolan/Liam Nolan

ATIA 20(1)

**September 25, 2025**

Planning & Development Department  
Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo  
9909 Franklin Avenue  
Fort McMurray, AB

**Subject: Formal Objection to Group Home at 105 Highfield Street**

**Dear Elias Biolley-Villalobos,**

I am writing to express my unequivocal opposition to the proposed group home development at 105 Highfield Street. As a resident of this family-oriented residential neighbourhood, I am deeply concerned by both the nature of the application and the serious procedural and safety issues surrounding this property.

### **1. Failure to Follow Due Process**

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo did not follow its own development permit process in this matter. As per standard procedure, a minimum of two weeks should have been provided for public response to the proposed development. This was not done, denying residents their fair and lawful opportunity to respond. This failure undermines public trust in the integrity and transparency of municipal governance.

### **2. Illegal Operation of the Group Home**

The property in question has already been operating as a group home—without a permit—for at least 18 months. At no point were residents notified, consulted, or given any opportunity to provide input on a facility that directly affects our community's safety and character. Operating such a facility without proper approval is not only illegal but unacceptable, and the Municipality must enforce its own bylaws rather than reward non-compliance.

### **3. Ongoing Safety and Nuisance Concerns**

During its unauthorized operation, this property has repeatedly demonstrated that it cannot be safely or responsibly managed. Specific, documented issues include:

- Individuals openly using drugs on the front lawn in plain view of neighbours and children (e.g., incident on August 29, 2025; video evidence available).
- Itinerant individuals loitering in the area, including sitting on neighbours' lawns and congregating outside the residence for extended periods.
- Previous tenants associated with criminal activity, including a known incident involving gunshots at the property.
- Consistent lack of supervision, with no visible accountability from the property owner, who resides outside the region and has a documented history of allowing unsafe tenants.

#### 4. Incompatibility with Residential Zoning and Bylaw No. 26/001

This quiet, single-family residential neighbourhood is not suitable for institutional or quasi-commercial operations such as a group or sober living home. The proposed use violates the intent and spirit of Land Use Bylaw No. 26/001 in several key areas:

- **Supervision:** There is no clear, enforceable plan for staff oversight or accountability.
- **Parking:** The property cannot safely or legally accommodate the required parking for seven residents and staff, leading to congestion and safety risks.
- **Character of the Area:** The operation is already disrupting the residential nature of the neighbourhood through increased foot traffic, noise, trespassing, and safety concerns.

#### 5. Public Safety and Community Impact

Allowing a facility of this type in a family-oriented area is a direct threat to public safety—particularly for children and elderly residents. The property's past and ongoing issues are not theoretical risks; they are real, observed, and documented problems that no responsible planning authority should ignore.

The pattern of mismanagement, unlawful operation, and neighborhood disturbance clearly demonstrates that this group home should not be permitted—now or in the future—under any circumstances.

#### Conclusion

This application must be **rejected in full**. The proposed group home is inappropriate, illegal, and unsafe for a residential neighbourhood. It violates the Land Use Bylaw, has been operating outside the law, and has already caused disruption and fear among residents.

The Municipality has a duty to protect its citizens, uphold its own bylaws, and preserve the character of residential communities. I urge you to take immediate and decisive action to deny this application and enforce closure of the unauthorized group home.

Sincerely,

Susan Golosky-Nolan and Liam Nolan **ATIA 20(1)**



(16)

**From:** [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#)  
**To:** ATIA 20(1)  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 22, 2025 8:41:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [Notice to Neighbours - 2025-DP-00321.pdf](#)

---

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello,

I have attached the notification letter for your review. It confirms that the application has been approved, and the appeal period is twenty-one (21) days from today. If you wish to submit an appeal, please follow the instructions provided in the attachment.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 2, 2025 4:56 PM  
**To:** 'Susan H'  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello,

The Wood Buffalo Wellness Society will be hosting an open house to address questions and concerns regarding their Group Homes.

You are invited to attend at the **Unifor Building, 10019 MacDonald Avenue, Fort McMurray (Downtown)** on either of the following dates:

- **October 6, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**
- **October 8, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

This will be a valuable opportunity to share your concerns and have your questions answered in person.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Susan H <ATIA 20(1)>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 26, 2025 3:46 PM  
**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>  
**Subject:** Re: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Thank you I have received your response

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 26, 2025, at 2:54 PM, Elias Biolley-Villalobos

<[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)> wrote:

Hello,

Please acknowledge receipt of this email.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Friday, September 26, 2025 8:56 AM

**To:** 'Susan H' **ATIA 20(1)**

**Subject:** Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Subject Property:

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello, Susan Harrison,

Thank you for your feedback and for sharing your concerns.

I am the assigned planner currently reviewing the development permit application, which is being circulated among our internal and external partners.

Answers to your comments:

#1 – I will redirect you to the applicant, *Wood Buffalo Wellness Society*, who can provide details on their residents. Their contact information is the following:

- Telephone: (780) 713-9794
- Email: [markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)
- Website: [Wood Buffalo Wellness Society | Home | Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada](#)

#2 – The Group Home will not be supervised or have in-house staff.

#3 – All potential concerns regarding the proposed Group Home must focus exclusively on planning considerations, including land use, intensity, infrastructure, neighbourhood compatibility, and policy compliance.

For context, Group Homes are considered a discretionary use within the R1 Residential District. Should the application be approved, you will be formally notified and provided a twenty-one (21) day appeal period. If you choose to appeal, you may be asked to appear before the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) to present your concerns regarding the proposed Group Home.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos**  
Planner  
Planning & Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017 | [rmwb.ca](http://rmwb.ca)

Office: 9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB, T9K  
2K4  
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Alberta T9H 2K4

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*STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY: The information contained in this email message and any attachments may be confidential and legally privileged and is for the use of the intended recipient(s) only. If you are not an intended recipient, please: (1) notify me immediately by replying to this message; (2) do not use, disseminate, distribute or reproduce any part of the message or any attachment; and (3) destroy all copies of this message and any attachments. Thank you.*

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**From:** Susan H **ATIA 20(1)** >

**Sent:** Friday, September 26, 2025 6:19 AM

**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** Wood Buffalo P&D Letter Re: 105 Highfield Street

External Message - Please be cautious when opening links or attachments in email

Good Morning,

Please find attached my letter regarding the group hole operating at 105 Highfield Street.

I look forward to your response.

Thank you

Susan Harrison

Sent from my iPhone

September 26, 2025

Planning and Development Branch  
Fort McMurray, AB

**Subject: Objection to Group Home Operating in Residential Neighbourhood Without Permit**

Attn: Elias Biolley-Villalobos

I am writing as a concerned resident of Highfield Street regarding a group home for adult males located at 105 Highfield Street, which has been operating in our neighbourhood for over two years **without an approved permit**. Residents are only now being notified of this group home, which is deeply troubling.

I would like to formally state my objection to the continued operation or formal approval of this group home in our residential community for the following reasons:

**1. Operating Without a Permit**

It is extremely concerning that this group home has been allowed to operate for more than two years without the proper zoning approvals or community consultation. This lack of enforcement and oversight undermines trust in the planning and development process and leaves residents questioning how this situation was permitted to continue unnoticed.

**2. Lack of Transparency and Public Engagement**

Our community was not informed about this group home when it began operations, and we are only now being engaged after the fact. This reactive approach to consultation is unacceptable, especially for developments that impact the character, safety, and cohesion of a neighbourhood.

**3. Safety Concerns for Families and Children**

Our neighbourhood is home to many families with young children, and residents expect a safe and stable environment. The fact that this facility houses adult males in various stages of personal recovery — without clear oversight or disclosure of supervision standards — raises legitimate concerns about safety and accountability. We do not know who is residing in the home, what measures are in place to monitor behaviour, or what the protocols are in case of disturbances. The uncertainty this creates is not appropriate for a family-oriented residential area.

**4. Impact on Property Values**

The presence of a group home may negatively influence market perceptions of the area and result in decreased property values. Many families have invested in this neighbourhood expecting a stable, residential environment, and any significant change to the nature of the area can have financial consequences for homeowners.

**5. Suitability in a Family-Oriented Neighbourhood**

This is a quiet, residential community made up primarily of families, seniors, and long-term residents. A group home, particularly one operating without oversight or consultation, is not in keeping with the character or intended use of this neighbourhood. Such homes may be more appropriately located in areas that are zoned and equipped for higher-density or mixed-use living.

In light of these concerns, I respectfully request the Planning and Development Branch **deny the application** for this group home and provide clarity on how it was allowed to operate without a permit for such an extended period. I also urge the city to take steps to ensure that future



developments follow proper procedures, with full transparency and early consultation with affected residents.

## 11) Engagement with Residents

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. I would appreciate a written response and would welcome the opportunity to participate in any future meetings or hearings related to this issue.

Sincerely,

Susan Harrison

(17)

**From:** [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#)  
**To:** [ATIA 20\(1\)](#)  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 22, 2025 7:34:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[Notice to Neighbours - 2025-DP-00321.pdf](#)

---

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello,

I have attached the notification letter for your review. It confirms that the application has been approved, and the appeal period is twenty-one (21) days from today. If you wish to submit an appeal, please follow the instructions provided in the attachment.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 2, 2025 4:56 PM  
**To:** 'Clay Johnston'  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello,

The Wood Buffalo Wellness Society will be hosting an open house to address questions and concerns regarding their Group Homes.

You are invited to attend at the **Unifor Building, 10019 MacDonald Avenue, Fort McMurray (Downtown)** on either of the following dates:

- **October 6, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**
- **October 8, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

This will be a valuable opportunity to share your concerns and have your questions answered in person.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
**Sent:** Monday, September 29, 2025 9:18 AM  
**To:** 'Clay Johnston' <[ATIA 20\(1\)](#)>  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Received, thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

**From:** Clay Johnston <ATIA 20(1)>

**Sent:** Sunday, September 28, 2025 12:47 PM

**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** Re: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Well, my family does not feel safe with junkies in rehabilitation. We strongly appose this.

On Fri., Sep. 26, 2025, 11:06 a.m. Elias Biolley-Villalobos,

<[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)> wrote:

Subject Property:

Civic Address: [105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2](#)

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello, Clay Johnston,

Following our telephone call, thank you for your feedback and for sharing your concerns.

I am the assigned planner currently reviewing the development permit application, which is being circulated among our internal and external partners.

Answers to your comments:

#1 – I will redirect you to the applicant, *Wood Buffalo Wellness Society*. Their contact information is the following:

- Telephone: (780) 713-9794
- Email: [markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)
- Website: [Wood Buffalo Wellness Society | Home | Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada](#)

#2 – The Group Home will not be supervised or have in-house staff.

#3 – All potential concerns regarding the proposed Group Home must focus exclusively on planning considerations, including land use, intensity, infrastructure, neighbourhood compatibility, and policy compliance.

For context, Group Homes are considered a discretionary use within the R1 Residential District.

Should the application be approved, you will be formally notified and provided a twenty-one (21) day appeal period. If you choose to appeal, you may be asked to appear before the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) to present your concerns regarding the proposed Group Home.

Thank you kindly.



**Elias Biolley-Villalobos**

Planner

Planning & Development Services

T: 780-793-1017 | [rmwb.ca](mailto:rmwb.ca)

Office: [9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB, T9K 2K4](#)

Fort McMurray | ᓂᓐᑕᓕᓐᓂᓐ | Nistawâyâw | Ełıdlı Kué  
Alberta T9H 2K4

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| *attachments. Thank you.*



(18)

**From:** [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#)  
**To:** ATIA 20(1)  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 22, 2025 7:33:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [Notice to Neighbours - 2025-DP-00321.pdf](#)

---

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

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Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 2, 2025 4:56 PM  
**To:** 'Suzi W'  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello,

The Wood Buffalo Wellness Society will be hosting an open house to address questions and concerns regarding their Group Homes.

You are invited to attend at the **Unifor Building, 10019 MacDonald Avenue, Fort McMurray (Downtown)** on either of the following dates:

- **October 6, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**
- **October 8, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

This will be a valuable opportunity to share your concerns and have your questions answered in person.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
**Sent:** Friday, September 26, 2025 2:47 PM  
**To:** Suzi W <ATIA 20(1)>  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Confirmed, thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**

Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Suzi W <ATIA 20(1)>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 26, 2025 2:46 PM  
**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca>  
**Subject:** Re: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Ok, thank you. It's [REDACTED].

Thanks

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 26, 2025, at 2:35 PM, Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
<DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca> wrote:

It will be confidential, subject to privacy laws.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Suzi W <curlysue1@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 26, 2025 2:24 PM  
**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca>  
**Subject:** Re: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hi there,

I would like to know first is will my address be shared with anyone? Or is it kept confidential?

Thank you

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 26, 2025, at 2:18 PM, Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
<DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca> wrote:

Subject Property:

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello, Suzanne Inglis,

Would you be comfortable sharing your property address to add to the list of respondents?

I am the assigned planner currently reviewing the development permit application, which is being circulated among our internal and external partners.

Answers to your comments:

#1 – I will redirect you to the applicant, *Wood Buffalo Wellness Society*. Their contact information is the following:

- Telephone: (780) 713-9794
- Email:  
[markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)
- Website: [Wood Buffalo Wellness Society | Home | Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada](#)

#2 – The Group Home will not be supervised or have in-house staff.

#3 – All potential concerns regarding the proposed Group Home must focus exclusively on planning considerations, including land use, intensity, infrastructure, neighbourhood compatibility, and policy compliance.

For context, Group Homes are considered a discretionary use within the R1 Residential District. Should the application be approved, you will be formally notified and provided a twenty-one (21) day appeal period. If you choose to appeal, you may be asked to appear before the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) to present your concerns regarding the proposed Group Home.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Suzi W [ATIA 20\(1\)](#) >

**Sent:** Friday, September 26, 2025 2:15 PM

**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** Re: Notification – 2025-DP-003XX – Sober Living House

Hi there,

The DPA # is 2025-DP-00321 and the address is **105 Highfield Street.**

Thanks

Suzanne

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 26, 2025, at 2:04 PM, Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
<[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)> wrote:

Hello, Suzanne Inglis,

Thank you for your feedback and for sharing your concerns.

To better assist you, please confirm the development permit application or the property address for the proposed Group Home.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos**

Planner

Planning & Development Services

T: 780-793-1017 | [rmwb.ca](http://rmwb.ca)

Office: 9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB, T9K 2K4

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Alberta T9H 2K4

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-----Original Message-----

From: Suzi W **ATIA 20(1)**

Sent: Friday, September 26, 2025 1:53 PM

To: Elias Biolley-Villalobos

[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)

Subject: Development permit application 2025-DP-00321

External Message - Please be cautious when opening links or attachments in email

> Hi there,

>

> I just received a couple days ago and notice of the application above.

>

> Myself and my husband who live very close to the application above for a group home very strongly disagree with this permit.

>

> This is a residential area with lots of children around who do not need to be exposed to male residents over 18 from a group home.

>

> This is a quiet family area that does not need offenders who are going to be there.

>

> This is a huge safety risk and should not be where there are families and children. We like to keep our neighbourhood free of mischief and this type of home.

>

> This neighborhood is for people to live and feel safe.



## 11) Engagement with Residents

- >
- > Thank you
- > Suzanne Inglis
- >
- > Sent from my iPhone

(19)

**From:** [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#)  
**To:** ATIA 20(1)  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House  
**Date:** Tuesday, October 21, 2025 9:42:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[Notice to Neighbours - 2025-DP-00321.pdf](#)

---

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello,

I have attached the notification letter for your review. It confirms that the application has been approved, and the appeal period is twenty-one (21) days from today. If you wish to submit an appeal, please follow the instructions provided in the attachment.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Thursday, October 2, 2025 4:56 PM

**To:** 'jaimeripka'

**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello,

The Wood Buffalo Wellness Society will be hosting an open house to address questions and concerns regarding their Group Homes.

You are invited to attend at the **Unifor Building, 10019 MacDonald Avenue, Fort McMurray (Downtown)** on either of the following dates:

- **October 6, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**
- **October 8, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

This will be a valuable opportunity to share your concerns and have your questions answered in person.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** jaimeripka <ATIA 20(1)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, October 1, 2025 1:24 PM

**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello, apologies for the late reply. I live at ATIA 20(1).

Jaime Swan

Sent from my Galaxy

----- Original message -----

From: Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

Date: 2025-09-30 2:50 p.m. (GMT-07:00)

To: ATIA 20(1)

Subject: RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello, Jaime Swan,

Please acknowledge receipt of this email.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Friday, September 26, 2025 3:02 PM

**To:** ATIA 20(1)

**Subject:** Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Subject Property:

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello, Jaime Swan,

Thank you for your feedback and for sharing your concerns.

Would you be comfortable sharing your property address to add to the list of respondents?

I am the assigned planner currently reviewing the development permit application, which is being circulated among our internal and external partners.

Answers to your comments:

#1 – All potential concerns regarding the proposed Group Home must focus exclusively on planning considerations, including land use, intensity, infrastructure, neighbourhood compatibility, and policy compliance.

#2 – Thank you for sharing your parking concern.

#3 – Please confirm the property address so we can look into this further. Also, should you have any questions regarding the residents of the Group Home I will redirect you to the applicant, *Wood Buffalo Wellness Society*. Their contact information is the following:

- Telephone: (780) 713-9794
- Email: [markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)
- Website: [Wood Buffalo Wellness Society | Home | Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada](#)

For context, Group Homes are considered a discretionary use within the R1 Residential District.

Should the application be approved, you will be formally notified and provided a twenty-one (21) day appeal period. If you choose to appeal, you may be asked to appear before the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) to present your concerns regarding the proposed Group Home.

Thank you kindly.



**Elias Biolley-Villalobos**

Planner

Planning & Development Services

T: 780-793-1017 | [rmwb.ca](http://rmwb.ca)

Office: 9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB,  
T9K 2K4

Fort McMurray | ᓄᓐᑕᓕᓴᓐᓂᓐ | Nistawâyâw | Ełıdlı Kué  
Alberta T9H 2K4

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**From:** jaimeripka **ATIA 20(1)**

**Sent:** Friday, September 26, 2025 2:51 PM

**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

**Subject:** Development permit application 2025-DP-00321 group home

Thank you for the opportunity to express my concerns about the application to have a group home in my neighborhood. I would like to start by saying that I have owned my house for 13 years and live in close proximity to the property being considered for a group home. I object to having a group home here for the following reasons.

1. Lowering of property value. Since 2016 the property value of most, if not all, of Fort Murray and been greatly reduced. At this point I owe more on my house than what its worth and so many neighbors have said the same. Having a group home in the neighborhood will further reduce that value placing an even greater hardship to homeowners in the area, making homes even harder to sell.

2. **Parking. That property is not equipped to handle an extra 7 vehicles.** While I realize that not everyone in the house may have a vehicle it is a possibility. On street parking adds an extra burden to an already crowded street for waste management and snowclearing vehicles to do their jobs efficiently.

3. There is already a house EXTREMELY close to the **proposed group home that we like to call "The Drug House"**. I feel like having a group home in such close proximity is probably not a good idea for the occupants of the group home or anyone else.

Again, thank you for the opportunity for expressing my concerns.

Jaime Swan

Sent from my Galaxy



Lisa Stewart

ATIA 20(1)

ATIA 20(1)

(780) 799-1123

---

September 24, 2025

Planning & Development  
Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo  
9909 Franklin Ave.  
Fort McMurray, AB

Dear Elias Biolley-Villalobos

Subject: Opposition to Proposed Group Home at 105 Highfield St.

I am writing to formally oppose the proposed development of a group home at 105 Highfield St. I have reviewed the development permit process outlined on the RMWB website, and I am confused as to why only 1 week's notice to respond was provided. I believe, as a homeowner, I would be considered a stakeholder. Stakeholder review states the application should be in circulation for a minimum of 2 weeks for review opportunity to provide comments. I am aware that 2 of the members of our small community impacted by this notice are away on holidays. It has been incumbent upon us to try to contact them to allow for a response. Only 1 has been contacted. I am concerned that a lack of response does not accurately reflect their potential opposition.

I am concerned that Wood Buffalo Wellness Society has taken this long to properly apply for the operations of a group home. I believe that this group home has been in operation for at least 1.5 – 2 years. In fact, I do not know if any of the residents impacted by development permit were even aware of organization operating the group home or who to reach out to if there were any concerns. This has not built trust between WBWS and the neighbourhood. If WBWS was not the operator, please advise me of such.

As a 26 year resident of the quiet, residential neighbourhood, I have serious concerns regarding safety, supervision, parking and the encroachment of non-residential uses in areas intended for single-family residential living. Below are my specific objections, supported by reference to Land Use Bylaw No. 26/001 and observed issues at the subject property.

Concerns:

1. Lack of Adequate Supervision/Enforcement of Rules

- a. The sober living home's rules as per the Wood Buffalo Wellness Society website have not been adhered to. Most recently, on evening of the 29<sup>th</sup> into the 30<sup>th</sup> of August, there was an incident two individuals that came out of the sober living home and consumed drugs on the front lawn in full view of at least 3 homes and 4 eyewitnesses. Home security camera coverage of this incident is available for review if requested. As per the rules outlined by WBWS, these individuals should have been removed from the sober living home. They were not and continue to reside there today. This demonstrates either a lack of non-compliance to WBWS own rules, or a lack of safety/security/supervision which is purported to be in place.
  - b. This raises the risk to both residents and neighbours: potential for noise, trespassing, drug trafficking, altercations or other public safety concerns.
2. Safety Issues
  - a. The group home with 7 individuals, plus all the support staff that are required as outlined in the WBWS website who are required to oversee and support the individuals, creates higher traffic (foot or vehicular), disturbances, increase of danger, and reduces the safety for our children and elderly in the neighbourhood. There are many young families on the street with many small children. I personally choose this neighbourhood due to the quiet, safe streets with a big cul de sac so that my children would be able to play outdoors in a safe, spacious environment.
3. Parking Constrains
  - a. The proposed group home does not have sufficient on site parking to accommodate 7 residents plus staff/supervision.
  - b. Under Bylaw 26/001, minimum parking stall requirements must be met unless a variance is granted. In cases of uses with higher than typical traffic or vehicle visits, a parking study may be required.
  - c. Inadequate parking will lead to overflow onto neighbouring streets, causing congestion and safety hazards (eg obstructed sight lines, emergency vehicle access issues)
4. Land Use/Character of the Area
  - a. This is a quiet single family residential neighborhood; introduction of a sober living home transforms a dwelling into a quasi-commercial or institutional use with multiple non-related occupants plus staff.
  - b. It may change the character of the street, increase noise, traffic and reduce privacy for residents. As someone who lives directly across the street, this has impacted me personally.
5. Compliance with Bylaw No 26/001
  - a. The Land Use Bylaw regulates uses, supervision, parking and development standards. Proposed development must conform to these.

- b. The proposal fails to satisfy (or there is lack of evidence to show full compliance with) the following:
  - a. Parking stall minimums
  - b. Supervision/care protocols expected in group home settings
  - c. Any impact assessments required by the bylaw (traffic, parking) if the use is greater intensity than typical residential.

Request

Given these concerns, I respectfully request that the Planning & Development/Council:

Deny the application as it fails to meet important criteria under Bylaw 26/001, particularly around parking, supervision and preserving the residential character.

Sincerely,

Lisa Stewart

(20)

**From:** [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#)  
**To:** **ATIA 20(1)**  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House  
**Date:** Tuesday, October 21, 2025 9:43:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [Notice to Neighbours - 2025-DP-00321.pdf](#)

---

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello,

I have attached the notification letter for your review. It confirms that the application has been approved, and the appeal period is twenty-one (21) days from today. If you wish to submit an appeal, please follow the instructions provided in the attachment.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 2, 2025 4:56 PM  
**To:** Krystal Gardiner  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello,

The Wood Buffalo Wellness Society will be hosting an open house to address questions and concerns regarding their Group Homes.

You are invited to attend at the **Unifor Building, 10019 MacDonald Avenue, Fort McMurray (Downtown)** on either of the following dates:

- **October 6, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**
- **October 8, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

This will be a valuable opportunity to share your concerns and have your questions answered in person.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
**Sent:** Monday, September 29, 2025 9:42 AM  
**To:** 'Krystal Gardiner' <**ATIA 20(1)**>  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Duly noted, thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**



Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Krystal Gardiner **ATIA 20(1)**  
**Sent:** Monday, September 29, 2025 9:35 AM  
**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>  
**Subject:** Re: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hi Elias,

Thanks for your reply.

My address is **ATIA 20(1)**.

I would like to add, The only reason they are applying for a permit now, despite operating without one for many years, is because my neighbour reported drug use on the property earlier this month. She told me she personally witnessed a pipe being used around midnight. There's not much of a backyard to that property, and it's right on the corner within view of many homes.

We all assumed they were operating with a permit until she called and was told otherwise.

Thanks

On Sep 29, 2025, at 8:54 AM, Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
<[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)> wrote:

Subject Property:

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello, Krystal Gardiner,

Thank you for your feedback and for sharing your concerns.

Would you be comfortable sharing your property address to add to the list of respondents?

I am the assigned planner currently reviewing the development permit application, which is being circulated among our internal and external partners.

Answers to your comments:

#1 – All potential concerns regarding the proposed Group Home must focus exclusively on planning considerations, including land use, intensity, infrastructure, neighbourhood compatibility, and policy compliance.

#2 – Thank you for sharing your noise concern.

#3 – Also, should you have any questions regarding the residents of the Group Home I will redirect you to the applicant, *Wood Buffalo Wellness Society*. Their

contact information is the following:

- Telephone: (780) 713-9794
- Email: [markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)
- Website: [Wood Buffalo Wellness Society | Home | Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada](#)

For context, Group Homes are considered a discretionary use within the R1 Residential District. Should the application be approved, you will be formally notified and provided a twenty-one (21) day appeal period. If you choose to appeal, you may be asked to appear before the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) to present your concerns regarding the proposed Group Home.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos**

Planner

Planning & Development Services

T: 780-793-1017 | [rmwb.ca](http://rmwb.ca)

Office: 9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB, T9K 2K4

Fort McMurray | ᓄᓐᓕᓕᓐᓂᓐ | Nistawâyâw | Ełı́dlı́ Kué  
Alberta T9H 2K4

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---

-----Original Message-----

From: Krystal Gardiner [ATIA 20\(1\)](#)

Sent: Friday, September 26, 2025 5:38 PM

To: Elias Biolley-Villalobos [DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)

Subject: 105 Highfield Street Development Permit concerns

External Message - Please be cautious when opening links or attachments in email

Hi, I'm writing with my concerns of the development permit application for **105 Highfield Street**.

I live within the 60 meters. That home has been operating without a permit for multiple years. There hasn't been problems in the past but there has been recently. Noise disturbances, large amount of people hanging around the home all hours of the night, vehicles coming and going constantly and suspected intoxicated people laying on the front lawn. The home isn't monitored, how do we know it will be now. They were okay with breaking the rules by running without a permit this long, it shouldn't be allowed to continue.

Thank you for taking these concerns into consideration.

(21)

**From:** [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#)  
**To:** **ATIA 20(1)**  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House  
**Date:** Tuesday, October 21, 2025 9:47:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [Notice to Neighbours - 2025-DP-00321.pdf](#)

---

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello,

I have attached the notification letter for your review. It confirms that the application has been approved, and the appeal period is twenty-one (21) days from today. If you wish to submit an appeal, please follow the instructions provided in the attachment.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 2, 2025 4:56 PM  
**To:** Tim Drodge  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello,

The Wood Buffalo Wellness Society will be hosting an open house to address questions and concerns regarding their Group Homes.

You are invited to attend at the **Unifor Building, 10019 MacDonald Avenue, Fort McMurray (Downtown)** on either of the following dates:

- **October 6, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**
- **October 8, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

This will be a valuable opportunity to share your concerns and have your questions answered in person.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Tim Drodge <**ATIA 20(1)**>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 30, 2025 8:46 PM  
**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>  
**Subject:** Re: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hi,

Home owner at **ATIA 20(1)**.

Thank you

On Sep 30, 2025, at 2:31 PM, Elias Biolley-Villalobos

<[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)> wrote:

Please acknowledge receipt of this email.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Monday, September 29, 2025 8:58 AM

**To:** ATIA 20(1) ATIA 20(1) >

**Subject:** Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Subject Property:

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello, Tim Drodge,

Thank you for your feedback and for sharing your concerns.

Would you be comfortable sharing your property address to add to the list of respondents?

I am the assigned planner currently reviewing the development permit application, which is being circulated among our internal and external partners.

Answers to your comments:

#1 – All potential concerns regarding the proposed Group Home must focus exclusively on planning considerations, including land use, intensity, infrastructure, neighbourhood compatibility, and policy compliance.

#2 – Thank you for sharing your traffic concern.

#3 – Also, should you have any questions regarding the residents of the Group Home I will redirect you to the applicant, *Wood Buffalo Wellness Society*. Their contact information is the following:

- Telephone: (780) 713-9794
- Email: [markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)
- Website: [Wood Buffalo Wellness Society | Home | Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada](#)

For context, Group Homes are considered a discretionary use within the R1 Residential District. Should the application be approved, you will be formally notified and provided a twenty-one (21) day appeal period. If you choose to appeal, you may be asked to appear before the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) to present your concerns regarding the proposed Group Home.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos**



Planner  
Planning & Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017 | [rmwb.ca](http://rmwb.ca)  
Office: 9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB, T9K  
2K4  
Fort McMurray | ᓂᓐᑕᓕᓐᓂᓐ | Nistawâyâw | Ełıdłı Kué  
Alberta T9H 2K4

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---

-----Original Message-----

From: Tim Drodge [<ATIA 20\(1\)>](mailto:ATIA 20(1))

Sent: Friday, September 26, 2025 5:50 PM

To: Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>

Subject: 105 Highfield Street

External Message - Please be cautious when opening links or attachments in email

Hi, 105 Highfield Street shouldn't have the development permit approved. They have been operating without a permit for many years. There are people coming and going from the house, multiple vehicles daily, a few months I witnessed 3 intoxicated people being dropped off to the property, so intoxicated they fell on the ground. It has been a disturbance on our quiet street. With the increased traffic from that property, it feels like a risk to children playing outside in the area. It's supposed to be a sober living house and it's far from that.

Thank you

(22)

**From:** [Elias Biolley-Villalobos](#)  
**To:** **ATIA 20(1)**  
**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House  
**Date:** Tuesday, October 21, 2025 9:48:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[Notice to Neighbours - 2025-DP-00321.pdf](#)

---

**Subject Property:**

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello,

I have attached the notification letter for your review. It confirms that the application has been approved, and the appeal period is twenty-one (21) days from today. If you wish to submit an appeal, please follow the instructions provided in the attachment.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

---

**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Thursday, October 2, 2025 4:56 PM

**To:** 'Sara Wanner'

**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Hello,

The Wood Buffalo Wellness Society will be hosting an open house to address questions and concerns regarding their Group Homes.

You are invited to attend at the **Unifor Building, 10019 MacDonald Avenue, Fort McMurray (Downtown)** on either of the following dates:

- **October 6, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM**
- **October 8, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

This will be a valuable opportunity to share your concerns and have your questions answered in person.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

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**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Thursday, October 2, 2025 11:12 AM

**To:** 'Sara Wanner' <**ATIA 20(1)**>

**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

I'm following up on this.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

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**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Tuesday, September 30, 2025 2:31 PM

**To:** Sara Wanner <ATIA 20(1)>

**Subject:** RE: Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Please acknowledge receipt of this email.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos, BURPI**  
Planner | Planning and Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017

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**From:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos

**Sent:** Monday, September 29, 2025 9:01 AM

**To:** 'Sara Wanner' <ATIA 20(1)>

**Subject:** Notification – 2025-DP-00321 – Sober Living House

Subject Property:

Civic Address: 105 Highfield Street, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2

Legal Address: Lot: 19, Block: 42, Plan: 762 0092

Land District: R1 – Single Detached Residential District

Discretionary Uses–Planning Commission: Group Home

Hello, Sara Wanner,

Thank you for your feedback and for sharing your concerns.

Would you be comfortable sharing your property address to add to the list of respondents?

I am the assigned planner currently reviewing the development permit application, which is being circulated among our internal and external partners.

Answers to your comments:

#1 – All potential concerns regarding the proposed Group Home must focus exclusively on planning considerations, including land use, intensity, infrastructure, neighbourhood compatibility, and policy compliance.

#2 – Thank you for sharing your traffic concern.

#3 – Also, should you have any questions regarding the residents of the Group Home I will redirect you to the applicant, *Wood Buffalo Wellness Society*. Their contact information is the following:

- Telephone: (780) 713-9794
- Email: [markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com](mailto:markamy@woodbuffalowellnesssociety.com)
- Website: [Wood Buffalo Wellness Society | Home | Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada](#)

For context, Group Homes are considered a discretionary use within the R1 Residential District.

Should the application be approved, you will be formally notified and provided a twenty-one (21) day appeal period. If you choose to appeal, you may be asked to appear before the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) to present your concerns regarding the proposed Group Home.

Thank you kindly.

**Elias Biolley-Villalobos**  
Planner  
Planning & Development Services  
T: 780-793-1017 | [rmwb.ca](http://rmwb.ca)



Office: 9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB,  
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Fort McMurray | ᓂᓐᑕᓕᓐᓂᓐ | Nistawâyâw | Etídlj Kué  
Alberta T9H 2K4

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*STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY: The information contained in this email message and any attachments may be confidential and legally privileged and is for the use of the intended recipient(s) only. If you are not an intended recipient, please: (1) notify me immediately by replying to this message; (2) do not use, disseminate, distribute or reproduce any part of the message or any attachment; and (3) destroy all copies of this message and any attachments. Thank you.*

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**From:** Sara Wanner <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 26, 2025 6:58 PM  
**To:** Elias Biolley-Villalobos <[DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca](mailto:DerbeElias.BiolleyVillalobos@rmwb.ca)>  
**Subject:** Development permit 2025-DP-00321

Hello

I am emailing a concern as a resident on highland close

I do not support this this development permit. Due to the amount of youth in our neighborhood I feel that safety is a concern and children safety should be a priority. Developing this would put them directly at risk. We are also in a close proximity to a high school.

I disapprove of this being developed. I am not supportive of this.

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SUBDIVISION AND DEVELOPMENT APPEAL BOARD  
**NOTICE OF APPEAL**

12) Notice of Appeal

In accordance with Section 678 and 686 of the Municipal Government Act and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Land Use Bylaw 99/059, an appeal to the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board must be filed within the legislated time frame.

Section 1 – Property Information				
Legal Land Description (i.e. Lot, Block, Plan or ATS 1/4 Sec-Twp-Rng-Mar)				
Lot	Block	Plan	ATS	
19	42	762 0092		
Civic Address				
105 Highfield St., Fort McMurray, AB T9H 3T2				
Development Permit Number or type of Order				
2025-DP-00321				
Section 2 - Appellant Information				
NB: At the time of the appeal hearing the individual acting as agent must produce the completed and signed Agent Authorization Form.				
Appellant Name (If the Appellant is a company, enter the complete legal name of the company)				
Lisa Stewart				
Agent <sup>1</sup> Name (if applicable)			Contact Name (if different) and position held	
Mailing Address		City/Town	Province	Postal Code
ATIA 20(1)				
Telephone Number (Daytime)		Alternate Telephone Number	E-mail Address	
ATIA s.20(1)			ATIA s.20(1)	
Section 3 – Appeal (Check One Box Only) for multiple appeals you must submit another Notice of Appeal				
Development Permit		Subdivision Application		Notice of Order
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approval		<input type="checkbox"/> Approval		<input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Order
<input type="checkbox"/> Condition of Approval		<input type="checkbox"/> Condition of Approval		
<input type="checkbox"/> Refusal		<input type="checkbox"/> Refusal		
<input type="checkbox"/> I/We are the Applicant or Land Owner of the subject property				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I/We are a person affected by an order, decision or development permit				
Section 4 – Reasons for Appeal				
Section 678 and 686 Municipal Government Act require that the written Notice of Appeal must contain specific reasons for the appeal. In support of your appeal, you are requested to provide a full statement of the grounds and reasons of your appeal. You may include any photographs, drawings or plans for clarification.				
I/We hereby appeal the decision of the Approval Authority for the following reason(s):				
Please see Attachment 1.				
(Attach a separate page if required)				
PLEASE SEE REVERSE FOR IMPORTANT INFORMATION				
Date		Signature of Appellant/Agent		
Nov 12 / 2025		ATIA s.20(1)		
If an Agent is representing the property owner, a letter is required from the owner giving consent to a property inspection.				
Registered Owner:		I/We hereby give permission to the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo to do a site inspection and take photographs of the property as necessary for the purposes of this Appeal.		
		ATIA s.20(1)		
		Signature of Registered Owner		
Please return the completed form and prescribed filing fee to:				
Clerk of the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board, 7 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Jubilee Center, 9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray AB T9H 2K4				
Telephone: 780-743-7001 Email: sdab@mmwb.ca				
<b>Protection of Privacy</b>				
The personal information you provide on this form is collected under the authority of section 4(c) of the Protection of Privacy Act. It will be used to process your appeal with the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB). Your information will be disclosed in accordance with section 13(1) of the Protection of Privacy Act. If you have any questions regarding the collection or use of this personal information, please contact the Legislative Officer – SDAB, 7th Floor, 9909 Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, AB T9H 2K4, or call 780-788-2222.				
For Office Use Only				
Appeal #:	Fee:	Appeal Hearing Date:	Date Applicant Notified:	Date Appellant Notified:

<sup>1</sup> Agent – A person who acts for a Property Owner, Applicant, Appellant, and/or Affected/Adjacent Property Owner during the appeal hearing process or at a hearing before the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board.

## Attachment 1

Development Permit Number 2025 DP 00321

Opposition to Proposed Group Home at 105 Highfield St.

As residents of this quiet, residential neighbourhood, many residents have serious concerns regarding safety, supervision, parking and the encroachment of non-residential uses in areas intended for single-family residential living. Below are our specific objections, supported by reference to Land Use Bylaw No. 26/001 and observed issues at the subject property.

Concerns:

1. **Lack of Adequate Supervision/Enforcement of Rules**
  - a. The sober living home's rules as per the Wood Buffalo Wellness Society website have not been adhered to. On the evening of the 29<sup>th</sup> into the 30<sup>th</sup> of August, there was an incident with two individuals that exited the sober living home and were met by 2 individuals on motorcycles parked on the lawn. The 2 individuals from the home consumed drugs on the front lawn in full view of at least 3 homes and 4 eyewitnesses. Home security camera coverage of this incident is available for review if requested. As per the rules outlined by WBWS, these individuals should have been removed from the sober living home. They were not and continued to reside there. This demonstrates either a lack of non-compliance to WBWS own rules, or a lack of safety/security/supervision which is purported to be in place.
  - b. This raises the risk to both residents and neighbours: potential for noise, trespassing, drug trafficking, altercations or other public safety concerns.
2. **Safety Issues**
  - a. The group home with 7 individuals, plus all the support staff that are required as outlined in the WBWS website who are required to oversee and support the individuals, creates higher traffic (foot or vehicular), disturbances, increase of danger, and reduces the safety for our children and elderly in the neighbourhood. There are many young families on the street with many small children.
3. **Parking Constrains**
  - a. The proposed group home does not have sufficient on site parking to accommodate 7 residents plus staff/supervision.
  - b. It is our understanding, under Bylaw 26/001, minimum parking stall requirements must be met unless a variance is granted. In cases of uses with higher than typical traffic or vehicle visits, a parking study may be required.
  - c. Inadequate parking will lead to overflow onto neighbouring streets, causing congestion and safety hazards (eg obstructed sight lines, emergency vehicle access issues)
4. **Land Use/Character of the Area**

- a. This is a quiet single family residential neighborhood; introduction of a sober living home transforms a dwelling into a quasi-commercial or institutional use with multiple non-related occupants plus staff.
  - b. It may change the character of the street, increase noise, traffic and reduce privacy for residents.
5. Compliance with Bylaw No 26/001
- a. The Land Use Bylaw regulates uses, supervision, parking and development standards. Proposed development must conform to these.
  - b. The proposal fails to satisfy (or there is lack of evidence to show full compliance with) the following:
    - a. Parking stall minimums
    - b. Supervision/care protocols expected in group home settings
    - c. Any impact assessments required by the bylaw (traffic, parking) if the use is greater intensity than typical residential.

We are concerned that Wood Buffalo Wellness Society has taken this long to properly apply for the operations of a group home. Our experience is that this group home has been in operation for at least 1.5 – 2 years. This has not built trust between WBWS and the neighbourhood. The Development Permit states that functional security cameras around the exterior of the house are required to enhance safety and security. If none of the residents pose security or safety concerns to residents, then why would this be necessary. Further, if security cameras and drug testing have been in place, why were residents not removed from the home after the August incident and provided the support that they should have received.

13) MDP Map 8

