



## STAFF REPORT

**Title:** Mental Health and Addictions Services - MLA Proposal

**Meeting Date:** September 19, 2023

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### **Executive Summary:**

Mayor Craig Copeland was one of 19 local elected officials carbon copied on a letter addressed to the Honourable Dan Williams, Minister of Mental Health and Addiction, regarding a proposal from Mr. Scott Cyr, MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul for the establishment of a “recovery community” in northeastern Alberta.

The recovery community is defined as a holistic treatment center, which would be designed in consultation with the municipalities of northeastern Alberta as well as the First Nations and Metis communities. Such a facility would be open to all residents and would draw inspiration from the Blood Tribe Recovery Community and the Tsuut’ina Nation Recovery Facility.

Given that MLA Cyr’s proposal relies heavily on community and stakeholder consultation, the exact location of the proposed recovery community and the nature of its programming are not set, but will be community driven. It should be noted that the City of Cold Lake is interested in having a designated facility under the Mental Health Act Forms and Designation Regulation in the City to preserve RCMP resources which are currently occupied with transporting people in a mental health crisis to a designated facility in either St. Paul or the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo.

Administration feels that these two initiatives are complimentary, and that the City of Cold Lake can express support for MLA Cyr’s proposal in conjunction with raising the issue of designating a local healthcare facility under the Mental Health Act Forms and Designation Regulation. Should both projects find a favourable response with the Government of Alberta, the Lakeland would have a community-focused recovery facility for people seeking treatment for issues with mental health and addiction and also have greater access to resources for people who are having mental health crises that brings them in contact with the RCMP.

Both issues can also be raised during an upcoming meeting with the Honourable Dan Williams during the Alberta Municipalities Fall Conference. The letter can be sent prior to the meeting, although timelines are tight if the Minister is to receive the letter and be briefed before the discussion. Alternatively, the letter can be sent after the meeting to reinforce the discussion, address any issues or topics raised therein, and to put the City’s support for these projects on the record.



**Background:**

On July 24, 2023, Cold Lake City Council met with MLA Scott Cyr regarding a number of pressing issues in the City of Cold Lake and the surrounding area.

The MLA was provided with briefing notes regarding:

- Cold Lake Rural Renewal Stream
- Cold Lake Air Weapons Range Agreement
- Mental Health Designation
- Alberta Supports Centre
- Highway 28
- MRI Proposal
- Municipally Controlled Corporation
- AME Project Briefing

The briefing note regarding Mental Health Designation noted that:

*Mental Health calls were in the top two (2) calls for service for the Cold Lake RCMP Detachment in 2022, comprising almost 8% of the detachment's total workload.*

*The City of Cold Lake has put significant funding into increasing our community's ability to respond to crime. This includes funding a Police Dog Service Unit, staffing a watch-clerk model designed to keep front-line members available to take calls as much as possible, rather than process paperwork, and adding several RCMP officers to the detachment's roster.*

*The City of Cold Lake has also extended the operational hours of its Peace Officers and, through the Cold Lake Regional Chamber of Commerce, instituted a private security program to help our business community guard against break-ins and vandalism.*

*The economic downturn in our region has led to an increase in petty crime and the number of people experiencing mental health crises who come into contact with the RCMP. The need to transport people to St. Paul or Fort McMurray for mental health calls is expensive and inefficient. It takes up mental health beds in other communities while tying up valuable front-line police members for extended periods of time. This, in turn, effectively nullifies the investment our community has made in additional officers with the purpose of increasing front-line police presence in our community.*

Providing a mental health and addictions treatment "community" in the region could alleviate some of the issues, however, administration feels that any support for this initiative should not detract from the City of Cold Lake's objective of having a Mental-



Health-Act designated facility which would allow for the RCMP to quickly transport people they come into contact with who are experiencing a mental health crisis.

The two projects would serve Cold Lake and the region well to work towards a solution for what MLA Cyr identifies as "...the intertwined challenges of addiction, mental health and rising crime rates in northeastern Alberta."

**Alternatives:**

- The Committee may recommend that Council authorize a letter in support of MLA Scott Cyr's proposal for a Northeastern Alberta Recovery Community and in support of the Cold Lake Healthcare Centre becoming a designated facility under the Mental Health Act.
- The Committee may recommend that Council authorize a letter in support of MLA Scott Cyr's proposal for a Northeastern Alberta Recovery Community.
- The Committee may accept this report as information.

**Recommended Action:**

The Committee may recommend that Council authorize a letter in support of MLA Scott Cyr's proposal for a Northeastern Alberta Recovery Community and in support of the Cold Lake Healthcare Centre becoming a designated facility under the Mental Health Act Forms and Designation Regulation.

**Budget Implications (Yes or No):**

No

**Submitted by:**

Kevin Nagoya, Chief Administrative Officer